



101 Great Shelter Ideas

Connie's Weekly Newsletter

The veterans among you may already be familiar with the 101 Great Shelter Ideas workshops that Julie Morris, Vice President, ASPCA and I (then Director of Shelter Programs for the American Humane Association) taught in the early 2000s at conferences across the country. It was and remains a popular presentation, largely because the 101 great ideas we offered were based on real life experiences from within the animal welfare community (you can still find the original content online).

The animal welfare community is full of great, original ideas to help generate community interest in animal welfare and improve current practices, and in my new role I am once again visiting your organizations across the country and am struck by your ongoing innovation. The variety of great, new ideas I've come across has inspired me to use this newsletter from time to time to share them with you.

This week I would like to highlight the "Relinquish by Appointment" program at Animal Humane Society.

Based in the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, Animal Humane Society operates five full-service, open admission shelters serving over 25,000 animals per year. When they decided to launch the program in 2010, they had a 67% placement rate.

Discussing the program with Kathie Johnson, Director of Animal Services at Animal Humane Society, she revealed: "There was a huge disparity in our community between the number of animals coming in and the number of animals the community was willing to adopt. It was a community problem, not an AHS problem, so we wanted to engage the community in the process."

The impetus behind the change in policy was the belief that the animals and people in the community could be better served by a surrender process promoting a face-to-face exchange of information. By requiring scheduled appointments, AHS could also better manage the flow of incoming animals to ensure they were able to efficiently and effectively fulfill the staff, time, and space requirements to serve each animal.

Without appointments, the number of incoming animals could fluctuate greatly, often resulting in backlogs of animals that could not be evaluated until a later date. In the worst case scenario, animals could wait days before a practical exam and/or spay/neuter surgery, and the longer an animal waits 'in limbo' at the shelter, the more likely it is to get sick.

When the appointment arrives, we do the behavior and medical exam while the customer waits," said Johnson, thereby streamlining the process and ensuring the new animal can be scheduled for necessary follow up care immediately.

It also ensures healthy animals that pass the initial exam, such as adoptable stray intakes and unsterilized animals, can still be classified as adoptable and eligible to be "put on hold" if a potential adopter selects the animal in advance of its release date. Once a stray animal fulfills the mandatory holding period, it can go home with new adopter.

"This has been a great success and the people putting animals on hold frequently come back to visit until the stray period is up," said Johnson.

Likewise, if an unsterilized animal is selected for adoption, it is fast tracked to surgery, improving the internal efficiency and flow from intake to adoption outcome.

If you aren't already convinced this could work for you, Animal Humane Society has the numbers to back it up. Since implementing the program, they've recorded the following data:

	2010	Now
Placement Rate	67.4%	79.5%
Live Release	66.9%	80.5%
Euthanasia	33.3%	19.2%
Feline LOS	31.6 days	13.8 days

Adding to that, instances of feline URI declined 59% as a result of better workflow in the intake process and the reduced LOS it has created. Is your organization ready for a Relinquish by Appointment program?

Did you know?

PetPoint offers multiple features to support community-wide programs like this one, including:

- Scheduling in Care Module
- PetPoint Transfer Network
- Lost and Found Partner Network

Join us at the PetPoint Summit in Chicago this September 15-17th to share your ideas and learn from innovative programs developed by your peers!

Sincerely,

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