

**Changing Perceptions in
Animal Welfare**

Thoughts from the Portland
and Denver Alliances

**Animal Shelter
Alliance of Portland
(ASAP)**

www.asapmetro.org

**Metro Denver Animal
Welfare Alliance
(MDAWA)**

www.mdawalliance.org

Similarities

- Most decisions by consensus
- Each member's vote is equal
- Governing documents
- Meet regularly and often
- Report and share statistics

More Similarities

- Neither is a 501(c)3
- No boards or officers
- Veterinary medical associations are members
- Targeted spay/neuter for cats

Biggest Differences

Meetings

- ASAP: work on initiatives
- MDAWA: education & knowledge sharing

Membership

- ASAP: 10 members, seeking to expand
- MDAWA: 25 members, accepts new members but does not solicit

**Perceptions Critical to Success
within Animal Welfare**

- Trickle down trust
- Collaboration beats competition
- Familiarity breeds respect
- No trash, no bash

More Critical Perceptions

- Internal perceptions drive external perceptions
- Effective external messaging requires a common language
- Educate your community to earn its trust and support

Thoughts from MDAWA

- Be non-judgmental and welcoming
- No labels, no boxes

We agreed to drop the "kill" language – it's essential for us to work collaboratively.

More thoughts from MDAWA

- No dog hugging or cat kissing in public – we can't be seen as crazy animal lovers

Moderation is essential in dealing effectively with the media, legislators, and others in the animal welfare.

MDAWA continues to evolve to better serve its members and the community

Metro Denver Shelter Alliance - In the beginning

- 1st meeting was a brainstorming session
- Committees tried to tackle a huge list of initiatives
- Only a few things got done
- Committee members had "real jobs"
- Folks felt overwhelmed and defeated

MDSA Makes a Course Correction

We set fewer and more attainable goals, but ...

- Right people weren't in the room
- Didn't have all the information
- Meeting attendance declined

**MDSA Becomes Metro Denver
*Animal Welfare Alliance***

- Biggest benefit of membership:
NETWORKING
- Change name to be more inclusive
- Promote networking groups, which could not exist without trust at the top

NetWORKING Groups

- Operations
- Transfers
- Volunteer management
- Foster
- Shelter veterinary medicine
- Behavior
- Lost and found
- Public relations/marketing

**Meeting Topics for
a Diverse Membership**

- Fundraising, including crowdfunding
- PetSmart Charities
- National Mill Dog Rescue
- Beyond Labels
- Difficult Conversations

More Meeting Topics

- Compassion Fatigue
- Hot Topics in Shelter Medicine
- Reptile Handling
- Human-Animal Connection
- Annual meetings with Pet Animal Care Facilities Act Program Manager and with Animal Control Officers

**Colorado's Pet Animal Care
Facilities Act (PACFA)**

- Licensing and inspection program
- Dedicated to health and well-being of animals in pet care facilities
- Animal welfare community pushed for and supports this act!

Trust is Essential

The key to changing perceptions within the animal welfare community is cultivating an environment of trust.

Changing perceptions is not a 5k run – it's the Oregon Trail in a covered wagon.

Jayne Nielson, Facilitator
Metro Denver Animal Welfare Alliance
www.MDAWAlliance.org
mdawalliance@gmail.com
