

Each shelter changed its performance – not just its communication style

2008

- Washington County had a **65%** live release rate for dogs and **35%** for cats
- Employees told people “you don’t want to know what we do here”
- Poor morale and sometimes less than optimal levels of compassion

2015

- **95%** LRR for dogs and **84%** for cats (all stray, deceased owner or protective custody)
- Considered desirable place to work – now attract employees from other shelters
- Great pride in their work and success of the shelter

Clear and high expectations

- Created procedures from chaos
- Held employees accountable
- Resistant employees learned termination was possible; most chose to find opportunities elsewhere
- Many initially resistant and skeptical employees became our best advocates
- Leadership helped them imagine the future
- Staff turnover greatly reduced over time

Added Resources

- Fulltime veterinarian
- Certified professional dog trainer
- Developed modern volunteer program (soooo much better than bringing in inmates!)
- Paid for primarily by increased donations!



You never know what ends up being hard

- Treating each animal as an individual
- Employees began to feel the pain of what they do (especially in the transition years when we euthanized animals we no longer have to euthanize)

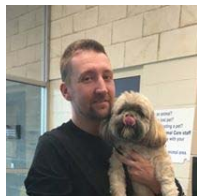
We communicated that we were a sad place



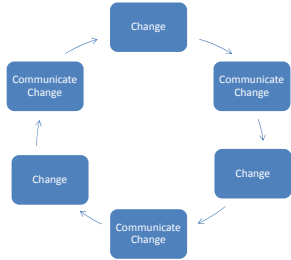
- Newsletters showed pictures of starving animals
- Volunteer orientation included a film showing animals being euthanized (including animals that would NEVER have been euthanized at our shelter)

Now we communicate that we are a great place to be a homeless pet

- Happy Facebook page
- Cheerful newsletters
- Take advantage of opportunities for positive press (e.g. open on July 4th – seems like we have almost as many reporters as stray animals!)
- Annual presentation to County Commission on our success



During times of rapid change information will always lag behind reality



Use social media as a two-way communication

- Correct misinformation (often community does it for us now!)
- Look on local Facebook “lost and found” pages and Craigs List lost pet postings for animals that look like ones in the shelter – and contact poster if we might have a match

ASAP

- A transfer is as much a victory as an adoption.
- We learn from each other – and share with each other
- From allies to colleagues to friends!

Typical Daily Email to CAT

We have a couple of candidates for transfer this week. Please let us know if you would like us to send either of these on Thursday.

1.) DMH Black Female with 3 kittens (2 males, 1 Female). The kittens are around a week old at most. The mom is very sweet and friendly. Mom is FIV/FeLV negative. The kittens are too young for testing or vaccines.

2.) Lyra: 10 week old DSH Lynx Pt. Spayed female. Lyra is hissy in the kennel when you approach her. She is easily handled and does not bolt around. She is scared initially, but is so sweet when you handle her. She has never offered to scratch or bite. She sat on my lap and enjoyed getting yesterday while getting used to the noises of the meet and greet room. She began to solicit attention from me while on my lap. I put her on the ground and worked with her on being picked up while on the ground. She did really well and was far less hissy in the kennel when she recognized me. This kitten could very much benefit from a foster situation where she can gain confidence and socialization. Her kennel presentation is what has prevented her from moving up onto the adoption floor. She also has had a little extra time to recover from her spay surgery. She did come in with health concerns, but has not had any issues recently. I have attached her medical records for you to review.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

- It's earned
- It's also a choice to give to another
- It is liberating