
What Worked, What Didn't, What's Next



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No More Homeless Pets in Utah
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What Worked, What Didn't, What's Next: A Review of Year Two of the No More Homeless Pets in Utah Campaign

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Overview

*Are we doing enough?
Are we doing it right?
Are we doing it as
efficiently as possible?*



No More Homeless Pets (NMHP) in Utah began in July 2000, with an aim of reducing the number of homeless pets destroyed in Utah's shelters by 15,000 over five years.

This document provides an overview of each element of the program, and, for each of those elements, lists specifically the things that worked, those that didn't, and what's next.

Overall, the program has so far been dramatically successful in Utah. Many of its elements are experimental, even pioneering. They have worked in Utah. They may or may not work in your community.

Some results of the first two years:

- The number of animals destroyed is down 11% over the baseline year (1999).
- 10,238 dogs and cats have been spared from euthanization.
- Adoptions are up 31% statewide. Those done by no-kill agencies are up 91%.
- 10,789 additional dogs and cats have found homes.
- The first Super Adoption attracted 9,000 people, and adopted out 397 dogs and cats in three days. The fourth, held last May, attracted 13,000 and adopted out 510.
- 20,964 discount spay/neuter vouchers have been used.
- The Big Fix (mobile clinic) has performed 8,697 surgeries.

While we recognize that these results are remarkable, we nevertheless find ourselves questioning and re-questioning our progress: Are we doing enough? Are we doing it right? Are we doing it as efficiently as possible? Because if we're not, we're letting down the very creatures we're here for. In short, we are so invested in the outcome of this program that we're never quite satisfied with our accomplishments and are always seeking better, smarter, more targeted ways of doing things.

And, in truth, we did hit both major and minor bumps in the road in Year Two. We met our overall adoption goals with the combined numbers of the shelters and no-kill partners, but fell short in the no-kill adoptions category, which is the major measure of our Maddie's Fund grant. We experienced some growing pains with the addition of new staff and, as with anything new, experienced trials with pilot programming.

The biggest challenge that we face on an ongoing basis is the balance we strike between focusing on adoptions and focusing on spay/neuter. We recognize the need to help, through rescue and adoption, the animals who have already been born, and we are honored to have this duty, but we know that without aggressive spay/neuter programs, we are not effecting a permanent change.

The Utah Veterinary Medical Association has begun recently a two-pronged effort, sponsored by Maddie's Fund, which focuses both on feral cats and Medicaid recipients. While we have high hopes that both of these programs

will succeed (and are supporting them any way we can, given our limited promotional funds for spay/neuter), it is somewhat frustrating not to be at the helm of these programs, especially in light of our conviction that spay/neuter is the only viable long-term solution to this problem.

Despite the challenges, we are very excited to be working toward the first no-kill state, and know that we have been given the chance of a lifetime. We are so thankful for the resources provided to us by both Maddie's Fund and Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. They are partners in making our dreams into reality, and every day we get a little closer. We hope that you will find some help in the following pages, and that you, too, will keep fighting the good fight so that in the not-too-distant future, we will all live in a world with no more homeless pets.

Adoption Program Elements

► Furburbia Pet Adoption Center

Overview: Furburbia, a.k.a. “the hip place to find true love,” is a fun, cheerfully decorated, inviting adoption center located in a mall in Salt Lake City.

The adoption center was designed to go head-to-head with pet stores. Its atmosphere is nothing like that of a traditional shelter, and it therefore attracts people who are drawn to the idea of adopting, but who aren’t comfortable visiting a shelter.

Furburbia provides the setting for, on average, 35 adoptions every week. Participating rescue partners and shelters fill the nearly 4,000 square feet of space seven days a week. Nearly 30 of our partners participate on a regular basis.

The company that owns the mall generously donated the space for Furburbia. No More Homeless Pets in Utah was responsible for all remodeling costs. This remodeling included building two off-leash areas and one cat room, as well as ripping up the existing carpet and installing vinyl composition tile throughout.

The center is run by one full-time and one part-time employee, and has attracted many dedicated volunteers. To offset operating costs, Furburbia carries merchandise, ranging from leashes to pet food to greeting cards, and accepts donations from the public.

Furburbia has received much media coverage, and is a terrific place for photographers and videographers to capture touching photos of adopters with their new pets.

What worked:

Being open seven days a week. Near the end of Year Two, we decided to switch from a four-day-per-week operation to a seven-day-per-week operation. Since we increased our hours of operation, our adoptions have increased from about 25 per week to about 35.

Choosing one group as an “anchor.” Now that Furburbia is open seven days a week, it is sometimes difficult to keep it “stocked” with animals, especially on weekdays. To keep Furburbia at capacity, we enlisted the Humane Society of Utah, a large organization with enough employees and animals to come to Furburbia seven days a week.

Installing glass doors. During the first year it was open, Furburbia didn’t have a door separating it from the rest of the mall. With no barrier for sound, we often found ourselves cringing when we couldn’t get a dog to stop barking. Now that we have a door, we worry a lot less about annoying our mall neighbors.

Rotating weekends. Because weekends are the busiest time at Furburbia, partners are rotated so that they usually have either one Saturday or one Sunday a month.

Creating off-leash areas. The two original off-leash rooms were so popular that we split them into four. The rooms provide a great place for adopters to

really get to know a dog they are considering adopting. The rooms also make Furburbia more fun. Who wouldn't smile at the sight of a kid playing with a dog and a tennis ball?

Involving the mall management in decisions. Consulting with the mall management during both the construction process and the ongoing running of the center has been very helpful in solidifying the relationship between the mall and the No More Homeless Pets in Utah program. Because of the good relationship that has resulted from this communication, the mall management has been very supportive and tends to be fairly understanding when issues (dog barking, smells, etc.) arise.

Using and training volunteers. Furburbia has a dedicated crew of volunteers, many of whom are at the center several times a week. All volunteers must attend a training session, and they are granted more responsibility as their skills and knowledge increase.

Creating a cleaning protocol. Because Furburbia is such a big place and has hundreds of people trekking through it every day and numerous animals from a variety of different participating partners, we worried about our ability to create an effective cleaning protocol. After consulting with several shelter managers and veterinarians, we established a workable cleaning protocol. It has been quite effective – no incidences of disease outbreak have been reported.

Cultivating good relationships with other mall merchants. This was a challenging task, especially in the beginning, because the only things the other merchants heard were construction noise and barking dogs. To combat any negativity, we let the other merchants know what we were doing and why, and invited them to see the center when they had the chance. We were also quick to apologize when a dog barked too loudly for too long. The relationship was further helped by the perception that Furburbia has increased foot traffic to the mall, and has thereby increased foot traffic to the other merchants.

Setting standardized adoption fees. These fees are \$65 for cats and \$75 for dogs. Having standardized fees prevents confusion in the minds of the public, who often don't understand that more than one group utilizes Furburbia.

Charging rescue partners 5% of their adoption fees. The 5% of every Furburbia adoption fee that goes to No More Homeless Pets in Utah helps to offset the operating costs of the center.

Utilizing volunteer construction labor. Volunteers helped with construction. This saved a lot of money and also resulted in a greater sense of ownership and pride for the employees and volunteers who helped out during construction.

Purchasing furnishings at thrift stores. The time it took to find good deals on cool furniture at secondhand stores was well worth it. Much money was saved and a good deal of "hipness" was achieved. All in all, the remodeling, decorating, and equipment costs for Furburbia amounted to less than \$10,000.

Creating a break area. To combat the problem of rescue group members and volunteers eating in the adoption center in view of the public, we created a break area in the back.

What didn't work:

Using tiles instead of linoleum. In retrospect, the installation of multiple colors of vinyl composition tile, a choice made because the tiles are both durable and attractive, was not the best choice in light of the need for extremely thorough cleaning of Furburbia every day. Although the floor was sealed to prevent seepage into the spaces between the tiles, sterility would have been easier to maintain had the floor been constructed out of one continuous sheet of linoleum.

Having a manager who couldn't remain fair and impartial. Because so many partners use Furburbia, it is essential to have someone in charge who can place friendships aside and make impartial decisions.

Allowing merchandise sales to slip to the bottom of the priority list. We have had problems focusing on merchandise sales, and our bottom line shows it. Because our expenses have increased (e.g., adding a part-time employee), we need to start bringing in more profit from merchandise.

Using inadequate signage. We didn't place enough emphasis on professional and consistent signage, and we ended up with lots of handwritten signs, some of which even had misspellings and/or were torn or wrinkled. It made Furburbia feel like a garage sale. We have recently overhauled Furburbia's signage, and the effect was quite dramatic.

Letting young kids volunteer. From the beginning, the manager of Furburbia has been inundated with kids wanting to volunteer, leading to a delicate situation. On one hand, you don't want to extinguish a kid's willingness to help and his or her devotion to animals. On the other hand, there are only so many tasks at Furburbia that a young child can perform safely. Also, it is too easy to become an unofficial daycare center, which is burdensome for both staff and participating partners. Because of all this, the decision was made that only kids 14 years and older are allowed to volunteer. Having this official policy has made it much easier to turn the younger kids away without hurting their feelings.

Expecting the adoption partners to be on time with their animals. All too often, the center is open for a half hour to an hour before the partners and animals arrive. This is, to say the least, undesirable. The public is disappointed to find an empty center and the volunteers and staff are embarrassed to have to admit that the animals are late. This is a constant battle, and one that we do not yet know how to win.

Convincing the adoption partners that it is unacceptable to leave before the center closes. Not every group leaves early, but the ones who do are sometimes unapologetic about it. So far, we haven't been able to get them to understand the necessity of having animals up for adoption every moment that the center is open. If we are empty, adoptions are lost and people may be tempted to buy from a breeder or pet store. Again, the fight goes on.

Relying solely on the adoption partners to clean the center. Because so many animals from so many different partners and shelters are brought into

So many people pass through Furburbia, and they are often so excited about the puppies, that asking them not to play with the puppies is futile.



Furburbia, thorough cleaning is absolutely essential to prevent the spread of disease. The rescue partners and shelters are, in theory, responsible for helping to clean Furburbia every night. Try as we might, there are some partners who do not help with cleaning. All too often, the manager of the center is stuck with a very lengthy, grueling job. To help, a cleaning company has been hired to come in once a week.

Enforcing the “no puppies on the floor” rule. Instituted to help prevent the spread of disease, this is a good rule, but one which is difficult to enforce. So many people pass through Furburbia, and they are often so excited about the puppies, that asking them not to play with the puppies is futile. We continue to do our best on this one, but the reality is that there will always be some transgressors.

Trying to enforce the rule that people sanitize their hands before and after touching each animal. Again, this is a good rule, but one we have trouble enforcing. We do not have enough staff or volunteers to watch every person in the center at all times. We have signs up and dispensers of alcohol hand gel placed prominently near all cages, but often people do not sanitize their hands.

What’s next:

Focusing more on merchandising. Our merchandise is not selling as well as we would like. A thorough examination of both our inventory and our merchandising techniques should help immensely.

Strengthening the Furburbia “brand.” We plan to analyze all facets of Furburbia – including signage, advertisements, décor, customer service, etc. – to ensure that our message and image is consistent throughout.

Doing deeper surveying through videography. We plan on spending some time at Furburbia with a video camera and a list of specific questions to try and find out more about our customers and why they are or are not adopting. By doing this, we believe there may be some “ah ha’s” that take place on our behalf that can be passed along to many of our shelter partners.

Creating a second Furburbia, to be run by one of our rescue partners. By having a rescue group in charge of the second location, we could be relatively certain that the facility would exist even after our program ends.

► Internet Adoptions

Overview: We wanted to provide the opportunity for all participating rescue organizations to list their adoptable animals on the web. About one half already had websites, which varied in level of sophistication and the number of adoptable dogs and cats listed. Few of the organizations were very good at keeping their websites up to date.

The half that did not already have sites were delighted to be provided with a digital camera and an easy way to put their animals’ pictures and bios online. Initially, one of our staff members was responsible for receiving e-mailed photos, putting them up, and removing them when animals were adopted. After several months, we converted to using Pet-Ark, a separate site with an excellent, easy-to-use system for uploading pictures and infor-

mation. With the Pet-Ark software, each rescue group can upload their own photos and stories. We now link to the Utah section of that site.

Internet adoptions can provide new challenges for rescue groups. Screening by telephone is not always easy. Animals sometimes must be transported across the country, which presents obstacles and expenses for partners that they hadn't encountered before. This is especially true for partners in rural Utah, who are delighted by the fact that they are finding new homes, but who are then faced with the challenges of long-distance adoptions.

What worked:

Having the website. More animals were adopted! Many of the rescue partners told us that they were getting significant numbers of adoptions because of the website. Some of those who had their own sites said they were getting increased inquiries. Here is a typical e-mail received from one of our rescue partners: "I did not want another day to go by without telling you thank-you for what you have done here. The first day our group started using your system, I had response and it has continued to explode from there."

Providing this resource to participating organizations. The website provides a strong sense of belonging to a cohesive coalition. It adds a lot to the sense that we're all working together.

Changing to the Pet-Ark link arrangement. The site is easy to use, has a wonderful labor-saving method of adding the animals' "stories," and has a better search mechanism than we were able to provide. It also cuts down considerably on use of staff time from the NMHP in Utah office.

What didn't work:

Listing adoptable animals on our own site. This practice proved to be excessively labor intensive. The job required chasing people to e-mail their photos and animal details, improving the picture quality before uploading, uploading the photos, chasing people for information about when animals were adopted, clarifying ambiguities in information, etc.

Letting Pet-Ark control the picture quality. Not all photographers are adept at getting the best animal shots, and the creators of the Pet-Ark system decided that download speed should take priority over picture resolution. We are discussing improving this with the Pet-Ark people.

What's next:

Implementing a new billboard campaign designed specifically to drive traffic to our website. The billboards will be up for six months, and we are hopeful that they will increase our website traffic significantly.

Hiring an independent contractor to help the partners with their photography and Internet skills. We believe the website avenue for adoptions has enormous potential that we have not yet fully tapped. However, our rescue partners need to seriously improve their picture quality and the speed with which they get animals' photos and information on and off the site. Therefore, we plan on sending out a "traveling" contractor to spend one-on-one time with some of our targeted partners.

Events and Promotions

Having a Santa on the corner was, surprisingly, our most effective advertising.



► Home for the Holidays

Overview: Home for the Holidays is a six-week promotion designed by Mike Arms of the Helen Woodward Animal Center in San Diego. Its focus is helping shelter animals find homes during the holiday season. The goal is to spread the message that it is better to adopt a shelter animal than it is to buy one from a pet store or a breeder.

Home for the Holidays lasts from late November to early January. For several weekends, adoption events were held at animal shelters throughout the state. We provided the shelters with advertising, decorations, and a Santa to help drive traffic to the shelters. During the 2001 holiday season, we found homes for more than 3,800 animals.

Near the end of the promotion, we staged an event at the state capitol building in order to gain media coverage for what the promotion had accomplished. The event featured a big map of Utah that was filled in with 3,800 (exactly!) stamped pawprints, each one representing an animal adopted during Home for the Holidays. Several adopters and their new four-footed family members attended the gathering, and each pet there added its very own pawprint to the map. The local NBC, CBS, and FOX stations all did stories on the event on both their evening and late-night newscasts.

What worked:

Having a Santa on the corner. This was, surprisingly, our most effective advertising. A volunteer at each shelter location would dress up as Santa, take a shelter dog, and stand on a busy street corner near the shelter. Behind him was a bright banner detailing the adoption event. The Santas waved to passers-by, endured catcalls, and attracted a TON of attention. One other note: Buying a Santa suit (approximately \$170) was a lot cheaper than renting one.

Advertising in the classified ads. This always seems to be effective, apparently because the classified ads are the first place many people look when they decide to get or buy a pet. One hint: Start the ad with a phrase that begins with an “A,” since this will put your event/animal first in the classified section.

Advertising in utility bills. It is often inexpensive, and sometimes completely free, to put an ad on utility bills. This strategy was an effective way to promote Home for the Holidays.

Advertising in city newsletters. This seems to work best in smaller towns. Small-town people are interested in the local “goings on,” and many read their newsletters cover to cover.

Using decorations done by local school kids. Networking with schools near each shelter was a great way to get cute homemade decorations. It’s also a chance to introduce kids to the problem of homeless pets in their communities.

Having a recap press conference. As described in the overview, this press conference was quite successful, and was also very inexpensive and simple. The key component was the pawprint-filled map of Utah; it was a great visual and was also very easily understood.

What didn't work:

Using newsprint advertising. We tried several different approaches with general newspaper advertising this year and, again, this was not as effective as we had hoped. Most people who attended these events were drawn there by advertising in utility bills, newsletters, or classified ads, or by seeing Santa on the corner.

Having free refreshments. People were not drawn to these events by the free food. We wasted more money on cheese trays and Christmas cookies than we'd care to count.

Maintaining an "adoptables" Christmas tree at a shopping mall. For this promotion, we decorated a tree with ornaments featuring adoptable pets. Though definitely cute, it was way too time-consuming to justify the results and it was hard to keep up with which animals had been adopted and which ones hadn't from the variety of different shelters that participated.

What's next:

Encouraging the shelters to take more of the Home for the Holidays responsibility. As NMHP in Utah, we've virtually spoon-fed this event to the shelters. We're concerned that they're not learning how to do these events themselves and that they will not be equipped to continue these promotions if and when NMHP in Utah ceases to exist. Next year we still plan to provide PR and advertising for several shelters, but we'd like them to get in the habit of handling most of the details of the promotion, like decorations and Santas, themselves.

► Strut Your Mutt

Overview: Strut Your Mutt has its roots as a Best Friends Animal Sanctuary outreach fundraiser. The popular dog walk, which is held every spring, quickly became a favorite event for dog-owning Salt Lakers, and currently attracts more than 4,000 people. When the event entered its seventh year in May 2002, it was decided by Best Friends to move Strut Your Mutt into the domain of No More Homeless Pets in Utah, with the hope of expanding its fundraising efforts to members of the No More Homeless Pets in Utah coalition.

Strut Your Mutt features a dog walk, doggie contests, entertainment, and numerous food and commercial booths. Strut Your Mutt is designed to be an anchor fundraiser for No More Homeless Pets in Utah, and to bring awareness of the cause to the community in an enjoyable atmosphere. The event is held in a community park with rented tents and several stages. A significant part of the funding for the events comes from sponsors, who receive logo recognition on banners, posters, newsprint, and T-shirts. They also receive mention on radio spots and "showcasing" during live radio remotes at the event. Sponsors sometimes get a booth at the event to promote their services or products.

A sister Strut Your Mutt is held each fall in the Salt Lake bedroom community of Ogden. This event is, as to be expected, much smaller in numbers of attendees and money raised.

We try every grassroots guerilla tactic in the book, from placing post-cards at restaurants to diligently placing door hangers in target neighborhoods.



What worked:

Having a great location. Strut Your Mutt is held in a favorite Salt Lake park in an affluent neighborhood. As always, we are very careful to choose a location that fits our audience for a particular event. It's crucial to pick a location with a lot of drive-by traffic. We also choose our locations based on name recognition. Ideally, our locations should be so well known that people know how get to them without an address so we don't spend valuable advertising and messaging time explaining how to get somewhere.

Conducting the event in the spring. We carefully picked the date of Strut Your Mutt – it's been held on the third weekend of May every year. In picking a date, we took into account several factors: no overlap with other large fundraising events that could compete with our demographic, such as the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Awareness Walk, and no overlap with holidays that may take people out of town, such as Mother's Day. Also, since this is a family event, we wanted to hold the event before school got out and families left for summer vacation. Finally, after spending a cold and snowy winter indoors, people are ready to get outside and have some fun with their dog!

Creating a fun, attractive family atmosphere. We work to create events that are festive and upbeat with live music, clowns, food and entertainment. Our event trends show that we have many repeat attendees and most of the survey results we get back comment on the fun atmosphere.

Keeping the event consistent. To build event legacy and name recognition, we've tried throughout the years to keep Strut Your Mutt as consistent as possible. This is very important in event marketing, especially if you're just breaking into events in your community. We've worked to keep everything the same year after year – from the location, to the dates, to the time the event starts, to the doggie contests, to the logo.

Creating great brand awareness. If you live in Salt Lake City, you'll be hard pressed to have never heard of Strut Your Mutt. At mixers and parties around town in the springtime, you don't hear the usual party small talk, you hear people asking each other if they're going to strut their dog this year in the annual fundraiser for Best Friends. In fact, a lot of Best Friends members that we hear from in Salt Lake tell us they found out about Best Friends through Strut Your Mutt. This event has been a great tool to build awareness for our cause as a whole. We attribute this to numerous efforts on the marketing, PR and advertising fronts, but we mostly attribute it to the catchy name and the consistency in timing and delivery of Strut Your Mutt.

Advertising and marketing creatively and aggressively. You can never have enough advertising and you can never have enough solid marketing. We try every grassroots guerilla tactic in the book, from placing postcards at restaurants to handing out our brochures at other Salt Lake events to diligently placing door hangers in target neighborhoods. We also distribute our brochure to over 250 retail locations throughout the Salt Lake Valley. To make our brochure stand out, we purchased cardboard holders to place next to cash registers. Take a page out of the book of candidates during the political season and plaster flyers around the area of town that makes sense for your particular demographic. Don't skimp on the regular advertising either – try to get lots of radio airtime, coverage in the newspaper, and donated TV

spots. One local TV station gave us “weather sponsored by Strut Your Mutt,” 10-second spots that they inserted during and before the weather and sports. And, a location with a lot of drive-by traffic is crucial for advertising. According to our exit surveys for Strut Your Mutt, our most effective form of advertising is the corrugated signs placed two weeks before the event on the edge of the park, facing a busy intersection.

Distributing pledge forms early. People can’t fundraise for us unless they have pledge forms in their hands at least six weeks before the event. Knowing that we need to give a six-week window of time for folks to gather pledges from their friends and family, we send out our direct-mail piece seven weeks before the event.

Doing PR early, but not too early. Because this is a fundraising event and you’re asking people to do something other than just show up on the day of the event, you need to start your PR a bit earlier than you would for other events. But, if you start your PR too early, you run the risk of your event becoming part of the “wallpaper.” We start public relations for Strut Your Mutt four weeks before the event. Our goal is to try to get appearances on at least 15 radio or TV shows. We try to get as creative as possible with PR. This year, for example, at the pre-event press conference, we featured a “Strutter” whose dog had weathered every Strut Your Mutt since we started the event. Three television stations covered the loyal “Strutter” and her dog, giving us some valuable exposure for our event before it even began.

Using lots of volunteers. Job out your event to willing volunteers. They exist everywhere! Our volunteer committee organizes the volunteers, who cover everything from distribution to site logistics to entertainment during the event. We regard these volunteers as unpaid employees, providing them with job descriptions and committee handbooks.

Doing surveys. With the success of Strut Your Mutt, we could have become complacent about feedback in the form of exit surveys. But, events and your audience are organic and change all the time. Do not assume that you know what people want. Listen to feedback, even when it’s tough to hear the honest truth, and try to implement suggested improvements.

Networking with the community. Strut Your Mutt has been a tremendous networking tool. The nice thing about putting on a high-profile event is that it forces your organization to get out there and ask the community for help on dozens of different levels, from asking for sponsorship, to getting the attention of the media, to asking local businesses to purchase booths.

What didn’t work:

Emphasizing the fun rather than the fundraising. Though Strut Your Mutt is primarily a fundraiser, it’s occurring to us that Salt Lakers are looking at this event as a party for their family and their dog, rather than a fundraising event for a good cause. And indeed, as we studied the event, all of our brochures, press releases and advertising are geared toward the message, “Come out and have a great time with your family and your dog.”

Being too generous with pledge gifts. Compared to other fundraising walk events, our pledge levels and gifts are way too generous. We’ll be reviewing those pledge items, cutting some levels out, and trying to emphasize that the

real purpose of this event is to raise funds for a good cause, not to get good loot.

Having open admission. Around 4,000 people are attending this event, but less than half of those folks are actually paying to walk. The walk is held in a large open park, so it's difficult to control admission.

Starting the planning late. This year, because the event was shifted from a Best Friends fundraising outreach event to a NMHP in Utah fundraiser, we didn't actually get started with our planning until January. Planning usually begins in November.

Shifting the focus from money raised for Best Friends to money raised for NMHP in Utah. The aim of Strut Your Mutt from this point forward is to support the activities of NMHP in Utah. Because NMHP in Utah is a program of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, the money raised at Strut Your Mutt is still being raised for Best Friends, but it is being spent on very specific programming. Getting this message across is confusing and cumbersome, and we didn't do a good job of making it clear. We are working on more consistent messaging for next year's Strut Your Mutt.

What's next:

Dealing with the plateau in growth. Over the last three years, we've hit a plateau in our growth both in numbers of attendees and money raised. We tried several different approaches this year, including a direct-mail postcard reminder, and more one-of-a-kind Strut Your Mutt pledge gifts. Even with these extras, we remained in the same no-growth phase. We're in the process of looking at new ways to grow.

Putting fundraising first. Fundraising is the main purpose of this event, so every decision that is made regarding this event will be made with fundraising in mind. Pledge gifts will be scaled back, and our advertising message will focus first on fundraising.

Using the event as an educational tool for NMHP in Utah. We've seen how effective Strut Your Mutt has been in converting Salt Lakers to the Best Friends' mission and we're hoping to use this event as a tool to help promote the message of No More Homeless Pets.

Teaching our rescue partners how to do a Strut Your Mutt event in their own communities. We'll be working with our partners so they can put on their own Strut Your Mutt events. Next year, we're also going to try teaching some of our partners to run area-specific Super Adoptions.

Expanding the event to a statewide level. We know the brand of Strut Your Mutt is very powerful, so we want to share the wealth and fundraising knowledge with our partners throughout the state. Besides teaching partners to put on a Strut Your Mutt in their communities, we're looking at doing the events on the same day, statewide, with the help of a retailer. It will be very similar to national fundraising walks, such as those done by the March of Dimes or the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, which are put on at the same time every year.

Finding a way to close admission. This seems to be our Achilles heel. As mentioned before, folks are participating in the festivities of Strut Your Mutt

After the May 2002 Super Adoption, the Humane Society of Utah had no need to euthanize any healthy animals for three weeks.



without actually contributing or paying to walk. We're not quite sure how to solve this problem because of the difficulties presented by the open space at Sugarhouse Park, where Strut Your Mutt has been held every year.

Cutting out the extras. Everything that doesn't fit within the funnel of fundraising will be cut out or seriously reviewed. In the last several years, we've gotten away from our true mission of fundraising and have been spending 80% of our time on things that will make a 20% difference.

► Super Adoptions

Overview: Twice a year, NMHP in Utah organizes three-day "anchor" Super Adoptions. We consider these the "Big Daddy" of our adoption events. This year, we also produced four smaller adoption events in other communities throughout the state based on the Super Adoption model.

More than 28 rescue partners and shelters from across the state participate in the twice-yearly Super Adoptions. The goal for each Super Adoption is 600+ adoptions. At our fall Super Adoption held in September 2001, 505 animals found homes. Our second Super Adoption in May of 2002 resulted in 515 pets being adopted.

Another positive consequence of Super Adoptions is that some of the participating shelters do not have to euthanize any animals for several weeks after the event. It is not uncommon for many shelters to be emptied of healthy animals as a result of these events. After the May 2002 Super Adoption, the Humane Society of Utah had no need to euthanize any healthy animals for three weeks.

Super Adoptions are designed to have a festival-like atmosphere, with bands, food vendors, and clowns. This fun atmosphere provides a way for the general public to view animals outside of the shelter environment. Each event is held in a PETSMART parking lot under rented tents. A significant part of the funding for the events comes from sponsors, who receive logo recognition on banners, posters, newsprint, and T-shirts. They also receive mention on radio spots and "showcasing" during live radio remotes at the event. Sponsors sometimes get a booth at the event to promote their services or products.

Our four smaller adoption events were held in various locations throughout the state. The goal of the smaller adoption events ranged in number from 200 to 300 adoptions. Two of the smaller events were held at PETSMARTs in Ogden and Taylorsville, another was hosted by the Humane Society of Utah in their outside quad area, and the final smaller adoption was held in St. George in a mall parking lot. We found these adoptions were workable and successful in smaller markets and could be produced by rescue partners in those areas.

What worked:

Choosing a strategic location. We were very careful to choose a central location, a place that was right off a freeway exit and had a lot of name recognition. Fortunately, a PETSMART store is located in a prime area of Salt Lake City where two major freeways intersect. This spot provided easy access and a familiar location to most Salt Lakers.

*You can never have
enough advertising and
you can never have
enough solid marketing.*



Choosing the right time of year. Although we have had some brushes with bad weather, spring and fall are great times to hold adoption events. It's usually not too hot or too cold for the animals. Still, it helps to plan ahead: Have rented swamp coolers or heaters available to help control the temperature in the cat tent...just in case. Our experience has taught us that, rain or shine, people will still come to our events to find the perfect pet. Bad weather does have an effect on the number of people who turn out but, surprisingly, the effect on the number of adoptions is minor.

Creating a festival atmosphere. We work to create events that are festive and upbeat with live music, clowns, food and entertainment. We hear from a lot of people that they don't want to go into shelters because they find them depressing. The Super Adoptions bring the animals to the public in a way that is fun, rather than upsetting. These events can be a good time for the whole family.

Advertising and marketing creatively and aggressively. You can never have enough advertising and you can never have enough solid marketing. We try every grassroots guerilla tactic in the book, from lawn signs to 40-foot banners on skywalks to bag stuffers at PETsMART. Take a page out of the book of candidates during the political season and plaster flyers around the areas of town that make sense for your particular demographic. Don't skimp on the regular advertising either – try to get lots of radio airtime and coverage in the newspaper, and use live radio remotes during the event. Classified ads are also surprisingly effective. And, for advertising purposes, it's crucial to pick a location with a lot of drive-by traffic; according to our exit surveys, up to 50% of our adopters were “just driving by.” To pull in even more of these people, we rent a huge balloon and attach a banner that reads “Super Pet Adoption.” We also put volunteers in cat and dog costumes, and send them out to a busy corner with signs promoting the event.

Doing a lot of public relations. We start gearing up the public relations machine three weeks before the start of the event. Our goal is to try to get appearances on at least 15 radio or TV shows. When we focus on our PR, we try to get as creative as possible. Creativity is especially important when going after pre-event press coverage. This year, for the debut of our “celebrity cat tower,” an 8' x 8' x 8' outdoor enclosure designed to showcase cats at Super Adoption, we designated a cat named “Polar” as our token celebrity kitty. For the pre-event press conference, Polar arrived in a white stretch limo, was ceremoniously walked down a red carpet, and was set down gently in the cat tower, which was bedecked with gold stars. Three television stations covered Polar's arrival, giving us some valuable exposure for our event before it even began.

Using lots of volunteers. Job out your event to willing volunteers. They exist everywhere! Our volunteer committee organizes the volunteers, who cover everything from distribution to site logistics to entertainment during the event. We regard these volunteers as unpaid employees, providing them with job descriptions and committee handbooks.

Standardizing adoption applications. We spent a great deal of time getting input from all the partners regarding what to put on the application. This collaboration has been a very positive experience for everyone. We made a few changes to the application this year, such as adding several survey ques-

tions. We wanted to find out more about the folks who came to the event and actually filled out an application for an animal and compare them against those who attended but did not apply to adopt a pet. We don't standardize the adoption contractual agreements; this is still up to the individual partners.

Standardizing the adoption fees. Cat adoptions are \$65; dog adoptions are \$75. Having set fees streamlines adoptions and doesn't confuse the public. We also have a centralized payment station where we collect all of the adoption fees for the rescue partners. We use 5% of the adoption fee to offset the cost of producing the Super Adoption. All paperwork is processed through No More Homeless Pets in Utah and checks to the partners are sent out two weeks after the event.

Making sure that all animals are fixed. Most partners obviously comply with this, but in the event that an animal is rescued right before the event and there wasn't time to get the animal fixed, we have our mobile clinic on hand to do surgeries on the spot.

Training the partners beforehand. Doing a training session for the partners before the event really helps cut down on confusion. There are always going to be details that are missed or forgotten by participants, but taking the time to go over everything in detail beforehand helps immensely on the day of the event.

Asking partners to show up on time and stay until the end of the event. This is so important to the image of an event. During the first Super Adoption, several partners showed up late and left early. Even if partners have adopted out all of their animals, they should stay until the end with their booth intact. Arriving late and leaving early sends a message to the public that the event is poorly organized.

Doing exit surveys. Surveys can be very revealing. Things that we thought were the gospel truth turned out to be the exact opposite of what we expected. Have a college marketing class help you write your survey, and make sure you try to sample at least a third of your crowd. We have people fill out surveys as they exit. As an incentive, their names are entered into a drawing for dog food. We also have a volunteer at the gate keep a count of the number of people attending the adoption. This information is helpful for wooing future sponsors.

Starting a bidding war. We found ourselves wondering if the company we usually rented our equipment from was giving us a good deal. So, we contacted a few of their competitors and got bids. By pitting the companies against one another, we ended up saving quite a lot of money.

Enclosing the cat tents. We rented tents that have three enclosed sides and an opening for the entrance that can be closed on the fourth side. This reduces stress on the cats and also helps in case a cat escapes.

Having an emcee to showcase animals. Craig Wirth, a local television personality, has emceed every one of our Super Adoptions. When we say he emcees the event, it's more like an emcee marathon. Craig is on the microphone from the beginning to the end of the event profiling individual animals, welcoming people, and stressing the importance of spay/neuter and adopting vs. buying a pet. This tactic has an amazing impact on the number

of adoptions, and also helps us communicate our message even to those who don't end up adopting.

Having good communication with sponsors. After the first Super Adoption, we learned the importance of having a written contract with sponsors that spells out their obligations and ours. We also learned the importance of having one main contact person on the sponsor's staff.

What didn't work:

Asking the shelters to stockpile animals. A lot of shelters have strict policies about how long they can hold animals before euthanizing them. Despite our efforts to have some shelters hold animals for longer periods of time during this event, we have been unsuccessful in lengthening this holding period with a couple of shelters in the Salt Lake area.

Having a shortage of animals at the end. Invariably we seem to run low on animals the last day of the event. We are still working on solutions to this problem.

Putting exit surveys on the adoption applications. We tried this because we had found in the past that most of our exit surveys were being filled out by people who hadn't adopted – probably because adopters had their hands full with their new pets. We thought that putting the survey directly on the adoption form would allow us to gather information from the most important people – adopters. The problem was that many people still didn't fill them out, and even those that were filled out were difficult to read because they were carbon copies.

Using our staff to transport and adopt out shelter animals. This year, we decided to help out a local shelter by agreeing to transport some of their animals to the Super Adoption. The original plan was that shelter personnel would take over from that point and conduct their own adoptions. This didn't happen. No one from the shelter showed up, leaving our staff to take care of and adopt out a dozen animals, some of whom turned out to be sick. In the future, we will insist that participating shelters provide their own transportation and adoption personnel.

What's next:

Placing more of a focus on fundraising at the Super Adoptions.

Teaching our partners to conduct Super Adoptions. As NMHP in Utah, we've virtually spoon-fed this event to the rescue partners and shelters. We're concerned that they're not learning how to do these events themselves and that they will discontinue them if and when NMHP in Utah does not exist. Next year, we're going to try teaching our partners to run area-specific Super Adoptions.

Doing all we can to finally achieve our goal of conducting 600 adoptions at one event.

Animal Control, Rescue Partners, and Veterinarians

*Our relationship with
animal control requires
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► Working with Animal Control Agencies

Overview: The goal of No More Homeless Pets in Utah is not achievable without the cooperation of the state's 56 animal control agencies. Recognizing this, we have tried to foster good relationships with these agencies and individuals. Of course, this has not always been possible – some animal control officers and shelter directors are burned out, skeptical, and/or tired of being the scapegoat for one of society's greatest travesties.

More often than not, however, our attempts to build a bridge between “no-kills” and shelters have been successful. Our relationship with animal control requires constant upkeep, great patience, and compassion.

What worked:

Visiting shelters in person. Touring shelters with animal control officers provides an invaluable opportunity to open previously closed doors. Nothing takes the place of a friendly face and a listening ear. Because many animal control officers feel wrongly judged, it helps to verbally empathize with their situation and reassure them that you are not there to gain ammunition against them but to learn from them.

Hiring an “animal control representative.” This year, we added a staff position designed specifically to develop relationships with animal control officers. Since we filled the position, we have seen a dramatic improvement in the depth of cooperation from the shelters. One tip: Our animal control rep has attended several National Animal Control Association meetings and trainings. This has helped him with the credibility factor when developing relationships, and has also helped him to understand the challenges that animal control officers face.

Asking field officers if you can go along with them on their rounds. You'll be surprised how much you'll learn! This really helps with developing an understanding of the challenges faced by field officers and it also works wonders to improve relations with animal control.

Offering non-monetary assistance to shelters. For example, we encourage rescue partners to take animals out of the shelters whenever possible. We have seen a dramatic increase in this and a dramatic increase in cooperation from animal control to open its doors during non-working hours. For example, during one Super Adoption, one animal control facility in Utah County opened its doors to a rescue group at 7 a.m. so they could retrieve the animals in time for the event.

Inviting animal control shelters to participate in special events and spay/neuter programs. We involve the shelters in our Super Adoptions and the mobile spay/neuter clinic, and we also give them the opportunity to be an outlet for our discount spay/neuter coupons. Not only does this increase the public's awareness and enhance their perception of the shelters, it has also resulted in some extremely congenial relationships between the shelters and us.

Designing events specifically for animal control. We brought Home for the Holidays to the shelters. Home for the Holidays is a regional six-week event, held over the holiday season, designed to find homes for shelter animals. One bright spot to mention: Most shelters in Utah are not open on

Saturdays because most government jobs run Monday through Friday. We encouraged several shelters in the state to try to stay open on Saturdays during the Home for the Holidays promotion. The promotion was such a success for several of the shelters that they have permanently opened their doors to the public on Saturdays, usually the best day of the week for adoptions.

Inviting animal control officers to attend our Idea Exchange meetings.

This is a terrific way to get to know your local animal control officers and to discover common ground. One Idea Exchange focused exclusively on building relationships between “no-kill” partners and shelters. It was heavily attended, and though not a panacea, it did result in many grievances being put on the table for discussion, which is the first step toward building better relationships.

Initiating re-adoption spay/neuter programs for individual shelters.

We have initiated a project with two geographically isolated shelters in rural Utah. We agreed to help them pay to spay or neuter every pet they adopt out, with two major conditions: The animal must be fixed before it goes home with the adopter and the animal control agency has to establish a discounted fee relationship with participating vets. We chose a geographically isolated area so we could have a good way of gauging the success of this program. We don't have results in yet, but things appear to be going well, and we hope to see a significant decrease in euthanasia in those two areas.

What didn't work:

Assuming that animal control agencies are as interested in this program as we are. Just like rescuers, a lot of animal control officers are burned out on dealing with the daily fate of animals that pass through their shelters. Because animal control agencies can't receive any Maddie's Fund money, some were reluctant to hear more about the No More Homeless Pets in Utah program at first. Most agencies needed added incentive – such as Home for the Holidays, Super Adoption and the Big Fix on Tour – in order to start cooperating and to realize that we were able to provide them with resources in a roundabout way.

Going above an officer's head to get statistics. Although we've only gone this route a couple of times, and only in drastic situations, we've found that it is a surefire way to create an uncooperative animal control officer. Instead, spend your time building relationships with the officers themselves, and you'll eventually get the statistics you need.

What's next:

Encouraging shelters to post their adoptable animals online.

Starting a program to help promote a few targeted shelters. We've noticed many of the shelters we work with lack the basics in terms of promoting themselves. Simple things can make a big difference, such as placing classified ads in the newspaper, putting up directional signage to the shelter, asking local radio stations to broadcast PSAs, and sending press releases to local papers.

Issuing spay/neuter vouchers to officers in the field. We plan to issue pre-

paid vouchers to the field officers of a few animal control agencies. The vouchers will offer a spay/neuter surgery for a nominal co-payment at participating veterinarians in their area. We feel officers in the field know best where the pet-overpopulation problem areas are in their community. By giving them the means to hand out nearly free surgeries, we're hoping to see decreases in those communities.

► Working with Rescue Partners

Overview: Twenty-two rescue partners participate in the No More Homeless Pets in Utah program. These partners range from small to large, from brand new to long established, from rural to urban, from volunteer-based to staff-based, and from facility-based to non-facility-based.

To participate in the program, partners must report their monthly adoption statistics, increase their adoptions, attend twice yearly Idea Exchange meetings, and cooperate with other partners, individuals, and agencies. In exchange for all this, the partners receive stipends and other assistance to bolster their adoption programs.

They also benefit from the increased name recognition provided by our advertising, program website, Furburbia Adoption Center, mobile spay/neuter clinic and special events such as the Super Adoption.

Other subsidiary benefits are the camaraderie, networking ideas, and strength in numbers they gain by aligning themselves with No More Homeless Pets in Utah and other rescue partners and animal control agencies.

What worked:

Dedicating two staff members as program coordinators. Each coordinator's primary function is to communicate with rescue partners. One of our coordinators focuses on the rescue partners in northern Utah, and one focuses on partners in southern Utah. These two people act as "account managers" for the rescue partners – they help with everything from counseling to advertising to dispute resolution. They also are responsible for communicating the goals and policies of NMHP in Utah to the rescue partners.

Giving the rescue partners a great deal of support. We communicate with them several times a week (via telephone, e-mail, letters, attendance at meetings, etc.); keep them up-to-date on the program; and always give them feedback on a job well done.

Actively discouraging them from speaking negatively about other partners or agencies.

Encouraging networking among the partners. As a result of our program, some incredible networking is taking place among the rescue partners, many of whom did not even know each other before the program started. E-mail has proven to be a particularly effective means of networking.

Providing opportunities for rescue partners to increase adoptions. Super Adoptions, Furburbia, our website, and a LOT of advertising have all helped our rescue partners to increase their adoption rates.

Giving grants to rescue partners for specific projects. Several small grants were given out to rescue partners who convinced us that their adoptions would increase if they were able to complete various projects. These projects ranged from buying display cages to advertising to hiring a part-time staff member. It turned out that some of the rescue partners were right on in their estimation of what would help to increase adoptions. (But some were not – see “What didn’t work.”)

Paying adoption stipends monthly. We do not pay a partner’s monthly stipend until we have the previous month’s statistics in hand. This has helped us to be more timely in our statistics reporting, keep our rescue partners on track with adoptions, and know sooner if any of our partners are in trouble.

What didn’t work:

Explaining program policies to just one member of a group. In some cases, explaining a policy to just one member of a group was not as effective as explaining the same thing to many members of the group. In general, if the whole group is told about a program policy, that policy is more likely to be understood and followed.

Giving grants to rescue partners for specific projects. In a few cases, the small grants given out to rescue partners didn’t help their adoptions – though they had been quite convincing in their presentation of what would help them. We believe some of these grants may have been too small and ineffectual for the projects requested, and some of the grants may have been mismanaged by our partners.

Contracting out fundraising assistance for the partners. We tried paying an outside consultant to assist the rescue partners with their fundraising efforts. The arrangement was ineffective because the partners were not learning how to fundraise, they were simply getting prewritten fundraising appeals. Also, it seemed difficult for the outside organization to capture the “personality” of each group, an essential part of an effective fundraising effort.

What’s next:

Recruiting new foster homes. The only thing limiting some of our partners from doing more adoptions is their need for more foster homes. We’re working on several different programs to help meet this need.

Giving staff-only grants. We are making several grants available each year to partners who want to hire a full- or part-time employee, and we are doing away with the grant system from Year Two whereby partners could apply for resources other than staff. We’re hoping this will have a positive effect on numerous operational issues, such as volunteers and foster homes, which will result in more adoptions.

Providing advertising and PR assistance. We are planning to focus extra advertising and PR efforts on a few rescue partners each year. This should help the partners increase their fundraising, volunteer recruitment and adoptions, as well as their overall presence in the community.

One potential pitfall is doing too much for the partners, that is, not allowing them to do for themselves.



► Increasing Rescue Group Adoptions

Overview: To continue to receive funding from Maddie’s Fund, the program must increase adoptions by more than 3,000 every year. To help the partners achieve their share of this increase, No More Homeless Pets in Utah conducts Super Adoptions and other adoption promotions, pays adoption stipends to each group, runs Furburbia, and has set up an online adoption database. In addition, the rescue partners have used their own methods to increase adoptions.

What worked:

Networking. By keeping in touch with other rescue partners (via e-mail, phone calls, etc.), some partners have been able to place animals that would have been euthanized. Some partners have better luck with certain breeds, some partners are great with puppies, and some breed-rescue groups log many requests from people looking for breeds other than the ones they focus on.

Taking animals from rural areas to urban areas for adoption. Case in point: One remarkable result of our campaign is that the Humane Society of Utah, located in Salt Lake City, is often completely out of puppies. Although this is great in many ways, it may have a negative effect if frustrated potential adopters decide to purchase from a pet store or breeder. To solve this problem, many rural partners have begun transporting puppies to HSU, which happily adopts them out.

Holding small pet-adoption fairs with animals from local rescue partners and shelters.

Increasing advertising. Some partners have convinced their local papers to run a “Pet of the Week” ad for them. Others have increased their use of the classified ads, have submitted articles to the newspaper or periodically send letters to the editor.

Posting adoptable animals on websites. This strategy is most effective when the website is heavily advertised. Also, a good photo can make all the difference. To make this process easier, all participating rescue partners were given a digital camera from No More Homeless Pets in Utah.

What didn’t work:

Trying to teach them to fish. Due largely to the effectiveness of our program coordinators, working with the participating rescue partners has been an amazingly successful part of our program. However, one potential pitfall is doing too much for the partners, that is, not allowing them to do for themselves. The money from Maddie’s Fund is only available for a limited amount of time; when it runs out, the partners must be able to survive on their own. Our challenge is to empower them to create their own successes, with or without Maddie’s Fund money and No More Homeless Pets in Utah assistance.

Trying to meet our no-kill adoption goals. We met our overall adoption goal of 25,100 statewide between our shelter partners and rescue partners. Maddie’s Fund, however, requires that we meet separate goals for shelter partners and rescue partners, with one caveat: If our shelter partners don’t

reach their adoption goals, they can be made up by our no-kill partners, but the reverse situation is not allowed. In mid-winter, we realized that we were falling short of our no-kill adoption goals, so we began to plan more mini-Super Adoptions and to promote rescue groups' adoption programs. Even with the added adoption events and promotional activity, we still fell short.

What's next:

Increasing staff grants. Grants to rescue organizations to help employ part-time staff have had a positive effect on their adoption numbers.

Training rescue partners in customer service. Good customer service is as important for rescue partners as it is for retail stores. Though animal rescuers are passionate about the dogs and cats, they often fall short when it comes to customer service. There is often not enough appreciation of the importance of good communication with potential adopters. We are working on a plan to help partners develop their skills.

Empowering partners to do their own adoption events. We need to start teaching rescue partners how to run their own adoption events. We will be crafting a system by which we can train and teach our partners the "how to's."

Focusing on fundraising. We will be helping rescue partners to become more fundraising-savvy in order to add to their resources and strengths. We may do this through our existing fundraising events.

► Idea Exchange Meetings

Overview: Idea Exchange meetings are held twice a year. They are designed to build the skills of our participating rescue partners and shelters. To achieve this objective, in Year Two, No More Homeless Pets in Utah developed the Idea Exchange meetings into a higher impact program, which offers intensive (oriented toward one subject) workshops to rescue partners twice a year.

Instead of passively taking notes during a seemingly endless series of lectures, participants are actively engaged in the learning process. We emphasize that it is critical that the partners bring as many members of their group as possible to each of these workshops, since each rescue group is asked to begin to plan and work on projects during the one- or two-day workshops. For example, one recent meeting focused on fundraising, and partners were expected to leave the meeting with a money-making plan in hand. The facilitators for each meeting assist the partners/shelters by guiding them through the necessary steps to succeed.

Each meeting has a different focus. In the past, Idea Exchange meetings have focused on spay/neuter, healing compassion fatigue, and public relations and media exposure. The most recent meetings have focused on fundraising and enhancing the working relationship between rescue partners and animal control agencies.

Our focus is high-impact and hands-on: We want our partners to leave with a plan that can be implemented immediately.



What worked:

Reformatting the Idea Exchange meetings to focus on one educational topic at a time. Our new approach to Idea Exchange meetings is akin to continuing education. Our focus is high-impact and hands-on; most of all, we want our partners to leave with a plan that can be implemented immediately. We've all experienced coming back from a conference, putting our notes away with the best intention of studying them in-depth, and never seeing them again until we move. So far, the fundraising and coalition-building tracks have netted measurable results with some of our partners.

Identifying the needs of participating rescue partners and featuring topics and guest speakers that will be relevant and helpful to them.

Offering financial assistance to partners. We paid partners \$200 to help cover expenses on the condition that they were able to bring at least three people from their organization to the Idea Exchange.

Holding the meetings in different parts of the state. For example, the first meeting of the year might be held in northern Utah and the second in southern Utah. Because the participating rescue partners are scattered throughout the state, scheduling the meetings in this fashion is more equitable than always holding them in Salt Lake City.

Inviting animal control officers to the meetings. Until recently, our meetings have been only sparsely attended by animal control officers, but each time we have a meeting, we find that more officers are eager to join in.

Planning the meetings well in advance. Rescuers are busy people – the more time you can give them to plan, the more of them will be able to attend.

Having fun! A lot of conferences can be intense and very focused. We try to provide a true party or mixer at the end of the day. It's actually a great bonding tool and helps ease tensions.

Having key No More Homeless Pets in Utah staff members attend meetings. This increases solidarity, shows respect for the partners, enhances trust, and provides an opportunity for staff members to address concerns in their particular area of the program.

Sending tapes, notes or minutes from each meeting to all partners, especially those who were unable to attend.

What didn't work:

Expecting all the partners to implement their new plans. We recognize that not every partner will implement the plans that they've taken away from these meetings. Our hope, though, is that with consistent education on a variety of topics, each partner will find the right way of successfully making use of what they've learned.

Providing only a short time for a question-and-answer session. Partners invariably have very specific and detailed questions about the ever-changing program. Guest speakers should be scheduled accordingly, leaving plenty of time for the Q&A session.

Tracking the number of adoptions and looking for trends will help everyone in the animal welfare community better understand what works and what doesn't.



What's next:

Doing a better job of convincing veterinarians and animal control officers to attend meetings.

► Gathering and Tracking Success Through Statistics

Overview: To gauge our progress toward our annual goals, Maddie's Fund requires monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports. These reports contain statistics on intake, adoptions, spaying and neutering, and euthanasia. To create the reports, numbers are gathered from animal control shelters and participating rescue partners, spay/neuter clinics, and veterinarians. Gathering the statistics is a monumental task. Once the statistics have been gathered, the report is generated. Again, this is a large and time-consuming job. We have tried many things to streamline this process, and are still working very hard to make it less cumbersome.

Even if Maddie's Fund didn't require the statistics reporting, we would have instituted it anyway. When we started this program, a number of our participating partners didn't even keep track of their adoption numbers and, therefore, their progress. It is vital that the animal welfare community measure how their work is progressing and what type of direct or immediate effect their programs are having in their local area. Tracking the number of adoptions and looking for trends will help everyone in the animal welfare community better understand what works and what doesn't.

What worked:

Creating a standard form that each agency fills out and submits every month. This makes things easier for both the person who is collecting the statistics and the person who is submitting them.

Designating one person in each part of the state (north and south) to be responsible for relating to and collecting statistics from rescue partners. Even though the rescue partners benefit directly from Maddie's Fund and NMHP in Utah, they are often remiss in submitting their statistics. Having just one person who relates to the rescue partners helps to avoid confusion and allows a good working relationship to be formed. To convince partners to report their statistics in a timely fashion, it helps to emphasize that the future funding of the program depends upon us being able to track our progress.

Making personal visits to animal control shelters. Because animal control shelters do not benefit monetarily from Maddie's Fund and NMHP in Utah, they tend to be less willing to provide the statistics we need. Visiting the shelter and developing personal relationships with the animal control officers can mitigate some of the skepticism and animosity. For example, after a staff member made visits to animal control shelters in southern Utah, timely reporting from that area increased by nearly 50%.

Promising not to publish statistics from any one animal control shelter. Even though such statistics are public record, some authorities are sensitive about publishing them. We treat them as confidential, which helps immensely when trying to alleviate an animal control officer's fear of being judged. We publish only regional statistics.

Being persistent. Many of the agencies that were initially hesitant to provide statistics have eventually come around. Frequent and congenial contact by mail, e-mail and telephone all contribute to enhanced relations.

Making it as easy as possible for animal control shelters to report. If a shelter is reluctant to report their statistics, we try to give them as many options as possible: Fax, mail, e-mail or telephone are all effective ways of reporting. Also, if an agency can only provide partial information, we take it.

Dividing the state into five regions. Tracking statistical trends by region allows us to see some significant differences and adjust aspects of our programs accordingly.

Hiring a staff member whose only job is working with the statistics. Creating monthly, quarterly, and annual reports for Maddie's Fund is very time-consuming and takes good Excel spreadsheet skills. By hiring someone part-time specifically to do this, we have freed up other employees to focus on their many other tasks. We also produce reports in a more timely fashion, which gives us the luxury as a staff to more quickly attend to the trends of our statistical reports.

What didn't work:

Allowing too little time for the gathering of the statistics. Still a problem for us! We did not realize how challenging and time-consuming the monthly gathering of statistics would be, especially in a state that contains several small, rural agencies that are not used to keeping records. The gathering of the stats turns out to be more difficult than generating the reports based on them.

Expecting the animal control representative to compile the statistics reports. As mentioned above, this task is very time-consuming. With 50+ animal control agencies to worry about, the animal control rep simply doesn't have enough time to compile the reports.

What's next:

Reviewing trends. We expect to have monthly meetings with the entire NMHP in Utah staff that will be dedicated solely to reviewing trends and brainstorming on trouble spots.

Implementing new measures for analyzing statistics. We intend to put new analyses into place, such as measuring our figures against the Utah population base, and providing a county-by-county per thousand statistical measurement of key numbers.

► Working with Veterinarians

Overview: One of the guiding principles of Maddie's Fund is collaboration. It is therefore not surprising that the organization stresses the importance of involving local veterinarians in spay/neuter efforts.

In light of this, the steering committee that guided the creation of No More Homeless Pets in Utah included the president of the Utah Veterinary Medical Association (UVMA). Nevertheless, our relations with veterinarians

Some grief could have been avoided if we had communicated with each veterinarian one-on-one right from the beginning.



have often been strained. Some vets have expressed their disapproval of our mobile clinic, parts of our voucher program, and some of our special events. To enhance relations and to strive toward the Maddie's Fund ideal of collaboration, we recently put new plans into motion.

What worked:

Forming a liaison committee. About midway through the first year, it became apparent that our communication with veterinarians was not at the level it should be. A liaison committee, consisting both of veterinarians delegated by the Utah Veterinary Medical Association and representatives from NMHP in Utah, was formed and met monthly to discuss plans and strategies. The liaison committee was effective in resolving many issues and misconceptions. As time went on, there were fewer issues to discuss or resolve. While it served a vital purpose, it is unclear what role, if any, the committee will have in the future.

Hiring a veterinarian to act as a liaison between NMHP in Utah and the vets. This role is served by our full-time Big Fix veterinarian. Veterinarians have a collegiality with one another and more is achieved if they discuss difficult issues among themselves.

Having our veterinarian attend UVMA board meetings. This was very helpful when our program started, and many veterinarians were raising concerns about our program. Recently, most of the concerns have either been resolved or have simply not been as energetically expressed. Our program gradually became a non-issue during the UVMA meetings, so we will attend these meetings in the future only when issues with our program are discussed.

Involving the local veterinarians with county spay/neuter promotions when the Big Fix Mobile Clinic visited. By involving, subsidizing and sending business to local veterinarians in our Big Fix visits, we were able to increase spays and neuters, in addition to decreasing the criticism some vets had of the Big Fix.

What didn't work:

Thinking that having the president of the UVMA on our steering committee was enough to facilitate good relations and communication with local veterinarians. We have learned that veterinarians are often very independent, and do not always listen to the UVMA. Some grief could have been avoided if we had communicated with each veterinarian one-on-one right from the beginning, just as we had done with the rescue partners and shelters.

What's next:

Increasing the number of county spay/neuter promotions and running some of the promotions without the Big Fix. We hope to run more county promotions, especially in the areas with the highest euthanasia and shelter impound rates.

Sending select veterinarians spay/neuter vouchers for them to distribute directly to their clients. Many veterinarians claim they know their clients'

needs best. By giving vouchers to veterinarians, we are better able to get them into the hands of the people who need them most. To make the voucher program more effective, we will only send them to vets who either participate in our county promotions or are performing a high number of spays and neuters. Veterinarians who have previously misused our program are still eligible to receive vouchers, but would receive a reduced number.

Spay and Neuter Program Elements

We have dramatically altered our perspective on the Big Fix in the past two years.



► The Big Fix on Tour: Our Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinic

Overview: First, it is important to mention that Maddie's Fund does not believe that mobile clinics are the most effective way to increase spaying and neutering, and therefore has a policy against funding them. However, they did agree to purchase our mobile clinic because Utah presented some special challenges. For example, 80% of the state is rural, making it more difficult to reach large segments of the population through more traditional, vet-centric means. For Year One, Maddie's Fund gave us \$10 for each surgery performed on the Big Fix. This was not the case in the second year. Instead, a subsidy from Best Friends Animal Sanctuary enabled us to maintain discount prices.

We have dramatically altered our perspective on the Big Fix in the past two years. Initially, as stated above, we intended to use it in rural, under-served areas. We were surprised to discover after Year Two that one of the few areas in the state to have decreased shelter admissions was an urban area that the Big Fix visited quite frequently. We started to believe that the decrease in that area showed that the Big Fix was an effective tool for fixing the pets of the working poor, who are reluctant to have their pets fixed in a conventional veterinary clinic. Since this realization, we have been focusing the Big Fix on areas that have the highest shelter admissions, which is primarily urban areas. In the coming one to two years, we hope to decrease shelter admissions in other areas through the Big Fix and other spay/neuter promotions.

The change of focus from rural to urban areas is also based on economics. Visiting rural areas increases the daily cost by \$300–\$350 for hotel, per diem and vehicle expenditures. Rural areas tend to have lower turnouts than do urban areas, because of the decreased population and the generally lower emphasis that rural communities put on animal care, especially cats. The combination of lower turnouts with higher costs dramatically increases the average cost per surgery in rural areas. The Big Fix functions not only more economically, but also more effectively, when it is able to consistently operate at capacity.

The Big Fix began operating in September of 2000. The original goal was to do 35 surgeries per day, four days per week, 50 weeks per year. This amounts to over 6,000 surgeries annually. As we struggled with staff and procedural issues, we were not able to reach this goal in our first year. Our second year proved to be much more successful. In Year Two, the Big Fix operated 177 days and performed 5,813 surgeries, an average of 32.84 per day, with a range of 1 to 77 surgeries per day. We feel that the van has been successful in that we estimate approximately half of our patients would not have been fixed had they not been serviced on the Big Fix.

If you are thinking of starting up a mobile clinic program, however, do not underestimate its probable difficulty. Mobile clinics present many challenges because of the difficulties of travel, weather and cramped quarters, and their impact on staff turnover. We feel that one essential criterion is to have a veterinarian play an integral role in the setup and management of the vehicle. Good management is essential for dealing with the frequent issues that arise in the operation of the mobile clinic. Because the core mission of the mobile van is to provide veterinary surgery, having a veterinarian with a

strong managerial presence is crucial. We feel that employing a full-time veterinarian to manage and work on the van is the best solution. Employing a full-time veterinarian with one established protocol, rather than part-time veterinarians, improves the efficiency of the van.

There is a tremendous range of surgical skill and aptitude among veterinarians. Veterinarians who work primarily as spay/neuter surgeons tend to become more proficient than non-spay/neuter specialists. Many veterinarians in general practice struggle to perform 2–3 cat spays in an hour. Experienced spay/neuter vets can typically perform anywhere from 6 to 10 cat spays per hour, typically with fewer surgical mistakes because of their increased aptitude. To develop this level of skill takes many months or years of performing high numbers of spay/neuter surgeries (at least 75–100 per week), which few veterinarians in general practice are able to attain. Finally, working in a busy spay/neuter clinic requires lots of teamwork, something that is hard to achieve with relief or part-time veterinarians.

In summary, we feel that a full-time veterinarian is essential to manage the operation, establish protocols, provide leadership, and perform surgeries proficiently.

What worked:

Having county spay/neuter promotions. A number of vets, especially in rural areas, are hostile to the Big Fix. We feel this is mainly because rural vets often have a monopoly in their own community and a visiting veterinary clinic is threatening. We helped to decrease the problem by incorporating local veterinarians into the Big Fix visits. During Big Fix visits, we asked area veterinarians to match our prices in return for a \$25 subsidy, which we were able to fund with Maddie’s Fund grant money. Many vets were overwhelmed by the demand and discovered that many of the pet owners who respond to such promotions are not their normal target clients. County spay/neuter promotions were also very effective in increasing the impact the Big Fix has on communities.

Employing a full-time veterinarian/manager. The veterinarian is always the default medical/surgical manager. Solidifying this management structure helps to avoid problems.

Setting the following prices: \$40 for female dogs, \$35 for male dogs, \$25 for female cats, and \$15 for male cats. Our vaccination prices are \$10 for FELV, \$10 for dog or cat combos, and \$10 for rabies.

Offering postoperative pain medication for both dogs and cats. We offer oral etogesic for dogs and oral burprenex for cats, at a flat rate of \$10 per animal. Animals and owners feel better when pain is appropriately addressed.

Not scheduling appointments. For a while, we tried to set up appointments for a certain number of clients in each town we visited. This was incredibly time-consuming, and often resulted in missed opportunities when clients failed to show up at their scheduled time. (See the point below about appointments when volunteer community coordinators are involved.)

Emphasizing quality. Our complication rate (infection, etc.) was approximately 1 per 700, which is considered very good. We treat pain both pre-

and post-operatively. We feel that excellent quality is one of the biggest factors in increasing the demand for the Big Fix.

Having two surgery tables and three anesthetic machines, even though only one vet works at a time. This allows for one animal to be induced, while one is prepped, while another is undergoing surgery. When the vet finishes with one animal, he/she can move right on to the next without having to wait. Having three anesthetic machines also allows less experienced veterinarians to be more effectively trained in high-volume spay/neuter.

Involving the local community as volunteers who can promote our clinic. Local volunteers who support the Big Fix are called community coordinators. We've found that the program seems to work best in rural areas. Depending on the level to which they wish to become involved, community coordinators can hang posters, preregister clients, provide lunch, do laundry, help with intake and discharge, and do a huge amount of local PR for the Big Fix on Tour. The efficacy of a community coordinator depends on his or her level of enthusiasm. The most effective community coordinators are typically affiliated with a local animal rescue/assistance program that is grateful to have the Big Fix in its community and will do anything and everything to help. Unfortunately, less motivated individuals tend to be less effective and usually do little more than hang a few fliers. We have been unable to find individuals in urban areas who are willing to volunteer as community coordinators, even when they are given five free spays/neuters for their efforts.

Traveling to urban Utah. Our statistics show that most of the homeless animal problem is in urban Utah. We feel that the van should go to the areas where the animals need it most. We are typically overwhelmed by the demand for the Big Fix in urban Utah.

Traveling to rural Utah. This was the true function of the Big Fix to begin with, and although it took us a year to get to the point where we could service rural Utah, the results have been encouraging. Although the demand for the Big Fix is not as high in rural areas as in urban areas, we have been effective in the rural communities that have highly motivated community coordinators. The rural communities are usually poor and are in need of the low-cost services we provide. And, while there are many animals in rural Utah, they tend not to be a priority to the owners, which is especially true of cats.

Having three staff people on board who can assist the vet and fulfill auxiliary roles. Each full-time technician works an average of three days a week on the van, in addition to performing other tasks, including scheduling, supply ordering, truck maintenance, volunteer coordination, and answering public inquiries. When experienced high-volume spay/neuter veterinarians are working, it is essential to have three support staff on board. Veterinarians who have not reached high-volume spay/neuter proficiency may only require two technicians on board.

Working the staff three to four days per week on the Big Fix. Three of our full-time technicians work 12 days on the Big Fix every four weeks. The rest of the time, they perform other administrative duties: One is the operations manager (in charge of vehicle and Big Fix maintenance); another is the inventory and order manager and emergency telephone contact; and

the third is the schedule manager and community coordinator manager. It is assumed that the administrative duties require approximately two days every four weeks. The fourth technician (which we are adding soon) will work 14 days every four weeks, with no administrative duties. Days on the Big Fix are long and hard. Staff are able to deal with the stress better if they are given time off to recover.

Having a clinic cell phone which is carried by one of our on-board staff at all times. This makes it possible for clients to contact us if they have questions or concerns.

Doing exit surveys. These surveys provide invaluable information. They tell us what demographic we're reaching and how effective various means of advertising are. They provide an opportunity for people to suggest ideas that we may not have ever considered. They can also be a great morale booster, since the comments are almost always very positive.

Doing direct mail to advertise. To advertise that the Big Fix is coming to town, we send a direct-mail postcard to every citizen in the community. Usually the places we visit are so rural that the address on the postcard simply has to state "rural route," the name of the town and the zip. In larger towns, we contact the local post office and ask for the zip code of the closest rural route.

Placing ads in utility bills and city newsletters. These methods of advertising seem to bring us most of our clients. Also, they are usually free of charge.

Parking the clinic at local animal control agencies. At first, we tended to park the clinic at parks, shopping centers, and other high-traffic areas. This worked fairly well, but had some drawbacks. One of these was a negative response from local veterinarians, who felt that having us at non-animal-related sites tended to "cheapen" veterinary medicine. The decision to begin parking at animal control shelters has been mutually beneficial for a number of reasons:

- Most animal control shelters have laundry facilities.
- Many shelters advertise heavily that the Big Fix is making a stop in their town.
- We give the shelter exposure and bring people to the shelter who may be potential adopters or volunteers.
- We enhance our working relationship with the shelters, most of which are very appreciative of our efforts.
- We usually fix 3–5 shelter animals for free each day.

Parking in the same place for two to three days. Running the clinic in the same spot for a few days cuts down on gas costs, wear and tear on the truck, and staff hours. It also allows us to gain more clients through word of mouth and people driving by.

Finding a place to park the clinic when it is not in use. Salt Lake County Animal Services has provided us with a spot in a secure parking lot and a locked storage area for our supplies. We are quite grateful for this arrangement.

Emphasizing that surgeries are subsidized by Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. We make this clear to clients via a paragraph on both intake forms and receipts. This helps people understand why our prices are so low in comparison to those at the local veterinary offices. This is quite important to the vets, who don't want people to think that their prices are exorbitant.

Offering vaccine clinics only in underserved areas. In areas that do not have a veterinarian within 40 miles, we set aside a time outside surgery for non-surgery patients to be vaccinated. Vaccines are veterinary practitioners' bread and butter. By not directly competing with them, we are eliminating a large concern of private veterinarians.

Offering family-plan rates. We will fix a mother and her entire litter for a flat rate – \$125 for dogs and \$85 for cats – no matter how many there are in the litter.

Maintaining strict sanitation rules. Many of the surgery animals who come to the Big Fix have never been vaccinated. The incidence of upper respiratory disease, distemper and parvo in our patient population is quite high. All staff members must wear gloves at all times and must disinfect their hands between animals.

Offering staff bonuses. We offer both daily and yearly bonuses to the staff of the Big Fix. There is a bonus for reaching the daily goal and a smaller bonus for each animal done over the goal. There is also a 10% salary bonus for reaching the annual goal. After the bonus was implemented, the staff became more inclined to work harder. Astonishingly, the complication rate decreased significantly after the bonus system was implemented.

What didn't work:

Attempting to operate the clinic more than three days per week with part-time staff. Relief technicians were generally less proficient than full-time technicians. Once a month, we worked a six-day week, three days of which were staffed by one full-time technician and two part-time technicians. The other three days were staffed by two full-time technicians and one part-time technician. These days were typically much more difficult for the staff to work, in addition to being less productive. We also struggled to find part-time technicians who could travel for three days a month.

Handling scheduling and ordering through the main office. Doing the administrative work in the main office was inefficient and problematic. The Big Fix operates primarily outside the realm of the office and communication problems were frequent and troublesome.

Servicing needs other than spaying, neutering, and vaccinations. There wasn't enough time to perform other procedures or prescribe most meds. The mission of the van is spay/neuter. It should not even try to perform as a full-service clinic, because it will ultimately fail. The pets' owners are informed of concerns noted by the veterinarian during the presurgical exam and are advised to visit their local veterinarian. The local veterinarians are best able to give full veterinary service to patients and are able to offer follow-up care for persistent problems.

Having the truck designed and built in Houston. The climate in Houston is nothing like the climate in Utah. Though it is a great vehicle from many points of view, our truck was not good in cold weather, to put it mildly. We had frozen pipes, with the resulting floods and ice-covered floors. We also had difficulty keeping it heated during the nights and weekends, which is essential for the biologics and chemicals used on the van.

Putting in a grooming tub. Our never-used tub was eventually ripped out and has been replaced by a bank of cages, with an exam table on the top.

Using the same advertising strategy for all places. It is important to customize advertising to fit the location being visited. We are still figuring out the best ways to advertise in each area. Our exit surveys are helping us fine-tune our methods. In general, we have found that in rural or small towns, advertising in the local paper and in city newsletters are both quite effective. These methods are not as effective in large, urban areas.

Having a rigid annual bonus. Some of our staff felt less motivated after we reached our annual bonus level of 5,000 animals, despite the fact that the daily bonus was still in effect.

What's next:

Moving up to 18 days every four weeks, with four full-time technicians and one full-time and one part-time veterinarian. This will allow us to do more surgeries than we are currently doing. By hiring a fourth full-time technician, we will be able to work an additional three days per month without having to regularly rely on relief technicians, which will allow us to maintain a higher level of consistency and quality.

Getting truck upgrades done. We are finally going to outfit the truck for winter conditions, which should have been done when it was built. Until now, either the generator had to be running, or the truck had to be plugged in, for us to be able to run the heaters, water heaters, or refrigerator. We could not run the generator at night and during weekends for fear of wearing it out. When we were able to plug it into an AC circuit, the smallest draw from the truck would often blow the circuit. The limitations of the truck made it difficult to keep the biologics and chemicals on the truck at a controlled temperature. We have also had to haul around vaccines in coolers to keep them from freezing or getting too warm.

To solve these problems, we will install a propane heater and convert the water heater and refrigerator to run off propane. This will allow us to heat the unit at night and on weekends without wearing out the generator, and will decrease the workload of the generator during the workday. We will also be able to run the refrigerator continually, eliminating the need to haul around the vaccines in coolers. Our other big problem with the truck has been the water tanks freezing at night and on weekends. We will have the water tanks insulated and heating coils installed to help keep the tanks from freezing.

Having a graduated annual bonus. Our staff will receive a 5% annual bonus for reaching the annual goal and an extra 1% bonus for each additional 200 animals fixed thereafter.

Providing four free feral surgeries per day when our full-time veterinarian is working. We have decided to make the Big Fix part of the feral cat solution. Doing an additional four feral cats per day is relatively inexpensive and should require 30 minutes, or less, of total staff time.

Having reduced-cost, cat-only surgery days. We will perform approximately 100 surgeries per day for cats for \$9.99 each. We will do this in conjunction with animal shelters so that we have enough space to house the cats. Along with making a huge impact on the community, we hope to gain publicity for our program.

Having a donation box on the Big Fix. The donation box will state: “All proceeds go to pay for homeless and shelter animals to be fixed on our mobile spay/neuter unit, the Big Fix. Every month our mobile clinic fixes an average of 45 shelter/homeless animals at no cost. Thank You For Your Contribution!”

► Spay/Neuter Voucher Program

Overview: Our spay/neuter voucher program, dubbed Clip ‘n Save, originally offered a \$20 discount on spay/neuter surgery at participating veterinarians. From the beginning, the vouchers were advertised quite heavily via television, radio, newspapers, and billboards. The vouchers are distributed through our office, rescue partners and shelters. They were also downloadable from our website.

In Year Two, we changed the voucher program dramatically. Vouchers became available only through an application process, and were targeted to low-income people. Vouchers range in value from \$10 to \$50, depending on factors such as income, number of children in the household, type of pet, etc. Applications are available on our website and at shelters throughout the state.

What worked:

Spreading the word that the voucher was available. Unfortunately, this seemed to work almost too well. The vouchers were highly popular, with nearly 16,444 redeemed in the first year of the program. What we found, though, was that one out of every three surgeries we were subsidizing would have happened even without our help. This means that thousands of people used the voucher who did not really need it. Essentially, in many cases we did exactly what we did not want to do – we funded surgeries that would have been done with or without the voucher.

Switching to an application-based, low-income voucher. This switch solved the problem we had in Year One of paying for surgeries that would have happened anyway (below baseline surgeries). Veterinarians participating in our program increased their surgeries (1999 baseline surgeries) by 8,595. We discovered that 4,525 of those surgeries were subsidized by our vouchers, leaving 4,070 surgeries done at full price.

Designing the program in a way that didn’t require veterinarians to discount their prices. The voucher program is popular with the veterinarians because they are reimbursed by NMHP in Utah for the entire amount of

Darryl's Posse is named after the Feral Fix mascot Darryl and his girlfriend Cheryl, the sterile ferals.



the voucher. They get to offer a discount without taking a financial hit, which most rescue partners ask them to do. Because of this, veterinarians throughout the state were eager to participate; the ranks of participating vets swelled from 52 at the beginning of the program to a high of 82.

Utilizing Senator Hatch as a TV PSA spokesperson. Although we can't directly track the results of this, we have numerous anecdotal stories indicating that people saw the commercial and were getting their animals fixed because "The senator told me to."

What didn't work:

Distributing the vouchers indiscriminately. Toward the end of Year One, because so many vouchers had been redeemed, we were facing the dilemma of running out of funds to pay for future surgeries. We had to do something immediately to stop the abuse of the voucher, so we started paying vets only for "above baseline" surgeries for the last three months of Year One. The veterinarians thought that was unfair, and many left the program. Luckily, most of them came back after we switched to the low-income program, but it took some time.

Assuming that it would be an easy task to get enough people to use an application-based voucher. In a drastic change from the first year of the program, we had some difficulty redeeming enough vouchers to meet our goal. It took some time for the new program to catch on. We redeemed very few vouchers in the first few months of Year Two, were unable to catch up, and so ended up a few hundred vouchers short of our goal of 5,000 at the end of the year.

What's next:

Allowing animal control officers in the field to distribute vouchers.

Animal control officers are in a very good position to determine who needs a spay/neuter voucher. We'd like to grant this ability to chosen officers who have demonstrated an interest in our program.

Allowing selected veterinarians to distribute vouchers. A few veterinarians will be chosen to distribute a limited number of non-reproducible vouchers to clients they feel would not otherwise spay or neuter their pets.

► The Feral Fix

Overview: The Feral Fix was designed to piggyback on the UVMA program that made it possible for feral cats to get fixed for \$10. The Feral Fix is a statewide coalition of feral cat caregivers led by a NMHP in Utah staff member and a committee of volunteers called Darryl's Posse. Darryl's Posse is named after the Feral Fix mascot Darryl and his girlfriend Cheryl, the sterile ferals.

Darryl's Posse coordinates Trap Trading Posts throughout the state, who in turn loan out traps in their local community, provide community resources regarding feral cats, and keep statistical records of feral cat sites. Darryl's Posse also fields numerous phone calls and public inquiries, records and administrates overall feral cat statistics, and trains the Trap Trading Posts and public in how to trap feral cats.

What worked:

Setting up various volunteer “Trap Trading Posts” across the state.

From a Trap Trading Post, members of the public can borrow traps, attend a trapping workshop, receive mentoring advice, and get referrals to veterinarians in their area.

Creating libraries and guidelines for every Trap Trading Post and phone volunteer. Each Trap Trading Post and phone volunteer is trained and provided with postage, phone cards, and library reference materials. This reference information is readily available on our website as well.

Requiring everyone who borrows a trap to fill out a loan agreement form and leave a deposit. Caregivers were asked to either return the traps within two weeks, or if they had more cats to trap, to simply submit their statistical cat tracking sheet so we could confirm that they were using the traps effectively.

Getting manufacturers to donate vaccines for feral cats when they were fixed by caregivers. Vaccines were donated by the manufacturer, who agreed to ship them directly to the participating veterinarians.

Setting up a hotline where a different volunteer was responsible each day for retrieving and responding to feral cat inquiries. These volunteers also agreed to handle e-mail inquiries.

Doing publicity and promotion to get the word out. We created door hangers with English on one side and Spanish on the other, got lots of publicity for National Feral Cat Day, and ran regular “feeding a stray” classified ads alerting the public of the opportunity to get ferals fixed for only \$10.

Starting an incentive program for the caregivers. On a quarterly basis, every statistical tracking sheet that was submitted was automatically entered into a drawing for prizes. The caregiver who fixed the most ferals won a gift certificate to a pet supply store. There were first, second, and third prizes.

Creating a PowerPoint presentation to take to large corporations to promote trap/neuter/return (TNR). When we showed the Alley Cat Allies video *The Humane Solution*, in conjunction with a slick PowerPoint presentation, to corporations, every single corporation that was approached agreed to at least try TNR!

Offering veterinarians a free trap divider to assist them with handling ferals. This opened up a rare opportunity to talk with clinics about appropriate feral cat handling.

Offering financial assistance to caregivers who were unable to pay the \$10 per-cat fee. We implemented this entirely on the honor system, and it seems to have worked well.

Keeping an electronic mailing list of caregivers. We put together an e-mail list of caregivers and used the list to send out notices of new incentives and program updates.

Holding a winter shelter-building party. The party brought caregivers together to network and meet others like themselves. We received tremendous positive feedback on that event.

There was much confusion about what could qualify as “feral” and what couldn’t.



What didn’t work:

Sending out a large packet of information to every participating veterinarian. The packet also contained the free trap divider offer. Only a handful of vets responded initially. It appeared that many vets did not read the packet or share it with their staff. However, as caregivers and others spread the word about the trap dividers, veterinarians called us.

Failing, initially, to coordinate with the UVMA. It took several months for NMHP in Utah and the UVMA to begin coordinating efforts. Once this happened, things began to run more effectively and smoothly.

Starting an incentive program for the Trap Trading Post volunteers and phone volunteers. This did not seem to have an effect on their performance.

Waiting for caregivers to follow through. We found that, in many cases, the Trap Trading Post volunteers needed to be proactive in getting caregivers to follow through after their initial interest.

Not having a common definition of “feral.” The definition of the UVMA for feral is “un-owned, free-roaming cat often wary of humans.” There was much confusion, however, about what could qualify as “feral” and what couldn’t. Some caregivers were turned away because the cat was not “mean.” About 20 percent of cats in most feral colonies are not totally wild, but are quite shy.

Expecting caregivers to be self-sufficient after one training session. Many caregivers require additional assistance – even if only for a short time – to help them become more comfortable with trapping the cats themselves. We did not have enough trapping volunteers in various areas to keep up with this kind of requested assistance.

Not stressing enough the need to fix absolutely every cat in a colony. Some caregivers returned the traps leaving one or two wily cats unfixed.

What’s next:

Educating and getting the buy-in of local governments and animal control agencies. We also plan to propose ordinance changes that will decriminalize TNR.

Working to better communicate with the UVMA. If we held regular meetings with the UVMA (maybe quarterly meetings), we could all benefit from the collective input.

Recruiting more trapping teams. We need more trapping teams across the state to help newcomers do the actual trapping or to help those who are unable to do the trapping themselves. We also need to recruit a chairperson to monitor trapping teams.

Establishing assistance to help trap those final few really wily cats. We also need to reiterate to caregivers that if any new cats enter the area, we would be delighted to loan them traps again!

Having a drop trap built and made available at every Trap Trading Post.

Ensuring that caregivers attend a trapping workshop. We need to set up a system whereby a trapping workshop appointment is made with the caregiver at the time that the phone volunteer first speaks with the caregiver. This will alleviate those gaps that occur when the caregiver simply doesn't get around to calling the Trap Trading Post.

Organizing food assistance programs.

Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations

► Marketing

Overview: Before receiving funding from Maddie’s Fund for the No More Homeless Pets in Utah program, we hired a marketing firm to conduct a telephone survey about adoptions and spay/neuter. We also integrated a survey that the Humane Society of Utah had conducted several years prior. We believe this is money well spent since based on this information, we were able to construct an advertising campaign that directly targeted our primary audience.

What worked:

Doing our homework. Through the aforementioned survey and previous activities and events, we found that our primary market for adopters was women, age 36–55, with a household income over \$60,000. We also found that a lot of people had only one pet at home.

Focusing our media buying. Based on our research, we have been able to focus our advertising and media buying to fit the age group and category of woman that is most likely to adopt another animal.

Using the pros to conduct surveys. There’s more to surveying and market research than meets the eye. Formulating a survey can be a tricky venture if you don’t know what you’re doing. We used a marketing firm in the beginning of the program to help us sculpt our surveys. We then learned from what they provided. A cheaper approach is to ask a master’s level marketing student to help design a survey. We usually never attempt to do our own surveying initially.

Gathering information from anywhere we can. We survey all the time – everywhere from Furburbia to Super Adoptions to the Big Fix. The more information we have and the more we understand about our audiences, the more effective we will be.

What didn’t work:

Not using a targeted message for spay/neuter. We should have decided earlier to target low-income areas for spay/neuter.

Marketing to all parts of the state in the same way. This applies to marketing all our activities – from the Big Fix to adoption programs to the voucher program. We are realizing that we have to treat each market very differently – what works in one town may not work in another town 30 miles down the road.

Creating the survey ourselves. We attempted our own telephone survey at one point regarding the Big Fix and realized three quarters of the way into the process that the questions were too open-ended and we were getting skewed information.

Conducting a research project on spay/neuter. We ended up spending a lot of money just to find out what we already knew: low-income is where it’s at.

The animal welfare movement is one of the last nonprofit sectors to focus in on what type of message and image is sent to the general public.



What's next:

Re-emphasizing the analysis of our exit surveys. Although we have always gathered information from exit surveys, it's very easy to get lazy and not analyze that information.

► Advertising

Overview: We feel very strongly that placing a significant portion of our budget into advertising helps get our message across. We also feel very strongly about conveying the right kind of message regarding the No More Homeless Pets in Utah campaign.

The animal welfare movement is one of the last nonprofit sectors to focus in on what type of message and image is sent to the general public. Our goal is to boost the image of animals and the level of importance that Utahns place on their animals. To help achieve this, we place a big emphasis on advertising.

We are fortunate to have the advertising agency R&R Partners take on our account largely as a pro-bono client. Our advertising campaign covers the spectrum from general messaging about spay/neuter to specific grassroots events. We have used TV, radio, billboards, bus boards and newspaper.

What worked:

Having an advertising agency handle our account. We've been saved a world of hassle in everything from design to creative work to production to media buying. The advertising agency has access to many different resources, such as Arbitron Ratings for radio and Neilson Ratings for television, to determine which outlet is the best suited to our needs. Having them route and purchase our media has not only saved us money, it's saved us a tremendous amount of time.

Having the right connections. Many of the employees at the agency that work on our account have been in their line of work for years. We have been able to get steep discounts in other areas of our program because of the connections the agency has. The agency itself has contributed over \$300,000 in pro bono work.

Striking a sponsorship deal with specific media outlets. We worked out sponsorship relationships with both TV and radio partners. In return we have received nearly \$150,000 in added media exposure and added value items – such as banners, t-shirts and catered goods – for our special events and promotions.

Creating a spay/neuter TV ad featuring Senator Orrin Hatch. The senator has a constituency in Utah that has been hard to reach and impact. His advocacy has helped us to reach these folks.

Using classified ads for adoptions. Sounds simple, and it is. We try to include specific breeds if possible, and we are always sure to include our web address.

Putting a banner ad on a local website that featured Olympics coverage.

During the 2002 Olympics, we had a banner ad up on our NBC affiliate's website – even better, it was in their Olympics section. The ad generated thousands of “click-throughs” to our site.

What didn't work:

Not being specific enough about added value items. We got a lot of great added value items from our media sponsors, but we weren't specific with the details in the beginning. For example, one of our radio partners promised us a 10,000-piece print job, but we never specified the type of paper, double-sided printing, coated or non-coated, etc.

Advertising events in large metropolitan magazines or newspapers. We still don't know why this doesn't work, but speculate it's because of the frequency of the daily paper – not enough people see a one-time ad. We would have to boost our frequency to have an impact and that wouldn't be worth our media dollars.

Putting general adoption spots on TV. Actually, we can't really say that this didn't work, but changing people's minds is a long-term process, and therefore not very feasible within the confines of a five-year program. TV is also quite expensive. Rather than running general adoption ads on TV, we've moved more toward promoting specific adoption events, Furburbia, our website, and the rescue partners.

What's next:

Starting a billboard campaign to drive traffic to our website.

Creating a yellow-pages ad for Furburbia. Our local pet stores place HUGE ads in the yellow pages...to compete, we need to be there, too.

Public Relations

Overview: We've spent a great deal of time developing our public relations plan. Once again, we were fortunate to have a local agency, Bremer Public Relations, help us formulate an initial public relations plan, give us direction on press kits, talk us through dealing with local veterinarian issues, and relate to the animal control agencies.

We put a lot into creating PR opportunities and getting the message of No More Homeless Pets in front of Utahns as much as possible.

What worked:

Developing relationships with the local media. Members of our staff have worked for many years to cultivate relationships and build the trust of the local press. This has paid off for us in the long run, since we have gotten a lot of coverage from both state and local media.

Setting up media opportunities. We try to create a press event for every major milestone we pass in our program, such as the launch of No More Homeless Pets in Utah, the unveiling of the Big Fix on Tour, and the announcement of program results at six months and the end of Year One.

We really brainstorm about creative ideas for attracting the media to our events.



Creating visuals that attract media attention. We really brainstorm about creative ideas for attracting the media to our events. For the launch of NMHP in Utah, for example, we decided to have a marching band and skydivers dressed as cats and dogs land on the capitol steps. This did the trick. All of the media stations showed up in full force and we had coverage on all channels for the next two days. We know we can't buy that kind of coverage and credibility.

Having one or two spokespersons only. We want to focus on building relationships with the media, so we have designated two official spokespersons to represent NMHP in Utah. Limiting the number of spokespersons also helps with delivering consistent information.

Holding press conferences on Sundays. In many ways, this seems like a bad idea, but it has been very effective for us. Sundays are slow news days, so the stations are looking for things to cover. Also, the viewership is high for Sunday evening news, so our stories are seen by more people than they would be most other days of the week.

Using inexpensive gimmicks. We've had a lot of luck with simple things like animals in costumes and press conferences with themes like "Happy Days" and "St. Patrick's Day."

Getting press coverage at least once a month. We once thought that this was a lofty goal, but we have had no trouble achieving it. In fact, it's more often the case that we are covered two to three times each month.

What didn't work:

Getting too complex in our press events. For our six-month review, we had a press conference at Furburbia. We strung 397 collars from the balcony of the mall to represent all of the animals that had been adopted out each month since the program started. The idea was too complicated for the media to convey in a short 30-second piece. We still got great coverage, but our message could have been stronger.

Not training the entire staff on how to handle the press. We've realized that at some point or another, each member of our staff is going to have to deal with the media. We've had reporters come into Furburbia and onto the Big Fix unannounced. While these situations for the most part resulted in no faux pas, we hadn't told our staff anything about how to handle the press. We've since corrected that and are in the process of training them on basic ways to interact with the press.

What's next:

Getting more coverage in the newspapers. Because of pre-established connections, we have had better luck at getting TV stations to cover our events. We need to spend some time cultivating relationships with newspaper editors, and making our press conferences more "newspaper friendly."

Getting more "feature story" coverage. Most of the publicity we get is centered around our special events and/or our progress toward our goals. We'd like to be the focus of more feature stories.

*What we do is fun
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► No More Homeless Pets in Utah Website: www.utahpets.org

Overview: We recognize that a website cannot replace advertising and other forms of promotion. But, right from the start, we felt that the Internet could be an important element in our program. Utah has a higher level of Internet penetration than any state in the country – approximately 50% – and we wanted to make full use of this 21st century resource. The site includes:

- Background information on the purpose and ideals of NMHP in Utah
- Facts, figures and FAQs
- Details of and links to participating organizations, shelters and veterinarians
- Information on upcoming events
- Spay/neuter information, including the downloadable application for the discount voucher
- Information on dogs and cats available for adoption
- Reports on how the program is progressing
- A newsletter
- A press section with press releases and FAQs

As we expected, the site is widely used – we track the user level. We also receive frequent e-mails commending us on the site. We believe that it effectively communicates our upbeat, fun “brand.” What we do is fun and enjoyable, though our mission is very serious. We want our site to communicate this and focus on the positive aspects of animal rescue.

What worked:

Using other advertising media to drive people to the website. We realize that the Internet medium, especially a new site, cannot be effective without significant advertising. We publish and mention our site in all of our TV, newspaper, radio and outdoor advertising. Because we have so many different elements to our program, including a large number of participants, we centralized and focused our advertising to our website. Our aim is to drive traffic to our site through intense advertising to support our different program elements.

Giving people one place to go for help and information on animal-related issues such as adoptions and spay/neuter. The website has proven to be an excellent means of connecting all dog- and cat-related topics in the state.

Doing Internet adoptions. When we started the website in July of 2000, several of the partners had never used a digital camera or published anything on the Internet. We have now trained most participating partners how to list animals on our site, which has resulted in numerous successful adoption stories.

Using the website as a way to disseminate specific information. Our website has proven to be an easy, time-saving tool in responding to inquiries about the program and related elements. It has also been an effective way to make the discount spay/neuter voucher readily and widely available.

What didn't work:

Relying too much on the site to distribute spay/neuter vouchers. Many individuals (i.e., low-income) who need the vouchers the most don't use the Internet. We adjusted some of our advertising to show an 800 number, rather than the web address, particularly in certain geographical areas.

Not realizing how labor-intensive it is to keep the website up-to-date. An effective website is an up-to-date website. We didn't originally factor in that we'd need someone to maintain the site at least part-time.

What's next:

Doing a total website revamp. We feel that the current "retro" feel no longer reflects our brand.

Adding a section selling merchandise. We want to add a store selling items bearing the NMHP in Utah logo, books, etc.

Adding a resource section for pet owners. We would like to provide information on animal behavioral issues, a network of local trainers, and a pet-friendly housing list.

Adding video clips of our events and programs. If a picture's worth a thousand words, a video must be worth, what, five thousand?

Providing a means to donate to NMHP in Utah online.

Corporate Sponsorship and Cause Marketing

Our major objective is “cause marketing” – using the assets of our organization to create a situation where both parties meet their goals, usually financial goals.



Overview: For nonprofit organizations, a corporate sponsorship program is a creative, virtually untapped way to increase revenue. Last year, we introduced a full-time staff position to package partnerships with corporations with the objective to create new revenue streams for both the sponsor and NMHP in Utah.

A lot of nonprofit organizations ask for sponsorship of their programs when, in reality, they are just asking for donations in disguise. (You know the routine: “We’ll put your logo on our t-shirts in exchange for a million dollars.”) Our major objective is “cause marketing” – using the assets of our organization to create a situation where both parties meet their goals, usually financial goals. It’s usually up to the nonprofit to initiate the creative process that will attain these goals. A word to the wise: When you first call on a new sponsor, it may take a lot of discussion upfront to get the corporation to understand that you’re not just asking them to empty their wallet in return for a logo on a banner.

We are very glad that we added the sponsorship position, since the added revenue has given us the freedom to expand some of our programs and has also given us added exposure with recognizable, trusted organizations in Utah.

What worked:

Planning ahead. Ideally, the initial cold-call to the potential sponsor should be done at least six months in advance. This gives us some leeway in connecting with the decision maker and gives them time to decide whether they want to be our partner. Also, we ask each company when they plan their budgets for the upcoming year, since this lets us know the exact time to approach them in the future.

Following up. This is crucial to every level of sponsorship, from the time you make that initial phone call, to the time you close the deal, to the time you have your wrap-up meeting. It sometimes takes several months to get in touch with the correct person at a company to inquire about sponsorship. Using a sales database (we use ACT!) helps us to stay organized and keep on top of the follow-up calls. Once the deal is made, we stay in touch with the sponsor. We make sure that they are following through with what they promised and are on the same page regarding the event, promotion or program that they are going to be involved in. After the event, we send out a follow-up report within a month. This report includes the final numbers: marketing demographics, number of impressions, amount of money raised, attendance, whether or not a goal was met, etc. Along with the report, we include samples of all advertising and marketing materials that the sponsor was mentioned in.

Communicating well with everyone. It’s critical to communicate clearly and often with your sponsor and those on your staff who are in charge of the event/promotion. Our sponsorship director makes sure each event coordinator is aware of everything that has been promised to the sponsor and also goes over the contract to be sure there are no surprises.

Selling sponsorships internally. Believe it or not, it’s just as difficult to sell sponsorship and cause marketing notions internally to your staff as it is to sell it to a corporation. Many of us in the nonprofit sector want our cause to remain “pure” and unsullied by the commercial world. We want to believe

that we deserve their money without all the strings attached because we do a great thing for society. We are nervous that, in approving corporate sponsorship, we are selling our soul to corporate America. The truth is, unless a sponsor is seriously trampling on your code of ethics through their day-to-day business, most of your constituents support the fact that you are reaching out to other sectors of the community to make yourself more successful and well-known. In Year Two, our corporate sponsorship director did a very good job of pointing out to staff the importance of partnering with our community businesses to add revenue to support our programming. It hasn't always been easy or completely understood by the entire staff, but overall it's gone better than expected.

What didn't work:

Not getting a signed contract. We've recently been burned because we did not get the sponsorship deal in writing. This is especially important because of the possibility of employee turnover within the sponsoring company. If you make a deal with one person, he or she might not be there a few months later when it comes time to collect the sponsorship money or products. We now make sure a contract is put together and signed by both NMHP in Utah and the sponsor before going ahead with the sponsorship. The contract states the exact dates that we need the money or in-kind goods, the details of what we are providing the sponsor (e.g., their logo on posters, a mention on radio spots), and the details of what is required of the sponsor during the event or promotion. This signed contract is your insurance policy for dispute resolution.

Stumbling on promises of exclusivity. An important element of many sponsorships is exclusivity. Exclusivity is when you promise a sponsor that there will be no competing organizations present (e.g., two pet food companies). During one of our Super Adoptions, we inadvertently broke a promise of exclusivity. This gaffe happened because of poor communication between the event coordinator and the sponsorship director. Good communication between these two staff people is key to avoiding this problem.

What's next:

Developing a statewide cause-marketing program. We're looking at developing a statewide program with a grocer or retailer. We're specifically targeting retailers that have locations in each of the 23 communities where our rescue partners operate. The program could consist of in-store displays, which would provide a donation mechanism through sales volume to support rescue organizations in the local community.

Getting sponsors for the Big Fix. Our mobile clinic is a very sponsor-worthy part of our program, and we don't think we have fully tapped its sponsorship opportunities.

Getting sponsors for Furburbia. Furburbia is a natural fit for several large sponsors because it's located in a high-traffic area. We're looking at creating numerous programs at Furburbia that include bounce-back coupons and using the courtyard in the mall to deliver promotions for our sponsors.

Getting bigger sponsors. Every day, our program is becoming more well-known; we'd like to capitalize on this by securing bigger sponsors.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers need to feel both needed and appreciated.



Overview: Volunteers are essential to our program's success. Before October 2001, the ownership of our volunteer program was shuffled around between several staff people and volunteers. It was difficult to keep track of volunteer records, who was calling whom, and who was responding to inquiries. In October 2001, we hired a full-time volunteer coordinator. Since then, our volunteer recruitment and usage has skyrocketed.

What worked:

Requiring all volunteers to attend a training session. In the session, we provide an overview of our programs and goals, have the volunteers fill out a questionnaire, answer questions, and have them sign liability waivers.

Creating volunteer committees to help run special events. We used volunteer committees for almost all of our special events in Year Two. Committee members handled everything from public relations to poster distribution to decorations. And, with only a few exceptions, they performed their tasks quite well.

Showing our appreciation. Volunteers need to feel both needed and appreciated. A simple "thank you for helping" goes a long way. We also try to send "thank you" notes regularly.

What didn't work:

Scheduling training sessions only once a month. We think we lost several potential volunteers who didn't want to wait a month to start volunteering. Weekly sessions work better.

Not enforcing that staff running projects had to fill out a volunteer request form. If the forms were used regularly, they would be quite effective. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case, and the volunteer coordinator had to handle a ton of last-minute requests for volunteers.

What's next:

Revamping the volunteer request form so it is easier to use. We hope to eliminate last-minute requests by simplifying the volunteer request form and requiring staff to submit their volunteer request forms before their projects are approved.

Training the staff to relate better to volunteers. We all need to remember that these people give freely of their time, skill, talents and heart for this cause. They are worth their weight in gold, so we should treat them that way. We are seeking out training tips to help staff interact effectively with volunteers.