Help Your Volunteers Help You!

Chances are -- if you're lucky -- your humane society or animal shelter uses community volunteers to accomplish daily chores such as answering telephones, cleaning cages, feeding animals and maintaining animal-health and -adoption records. But, volunteers could do so much more for your organization if given the chance. While helping to accomplish your organization's goals, volunteers can gain new skills through interesting and worthwhile working experiences. Best of all, satisfied volunteers could become your organization's best public-relations agents!

According to Voluntary Action Leadership (winter 1982), published by VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement (1111 N. 19th St., Room 500, Arlington, VA 22209), a March 1981 Gallup survey on the nature and scope of volunteerism in this country

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Both children and adults can provide useful volunteer services. Revealed that 52 percent of American adults and an almost equal proportion of teenagers (53 percent) volunteered their time between March 1980 and March 1981. For the purpose of the survey, "volunteerism" was defined not only as efforts by people who give their time to organizations, but also those who perform individual informal tasks without pay (such as voluntarily cooking or cleaning, for a disabled person).

The survey results showed that 44 percent of the adults who volunteered in 1981 first did so because they were asked to volunteer by someone else. Teenagers said the same thing: 53 percent volunteered after they were asked to do so by another person. Only six percent of the adults volunteered in response to an ad for or some information about a particular volunteer activity. Forty-five percent of the adults and 49 percent of the teenagers started volunteering because of their desire to do something useful.

These findings show that one way a shelter or humane society can build a substantial network of community volunteers is by personally contacting them to request their services. And, active volunteers need to be reminded from time to time that they are performing a useful service or they will lose interest in your program.

Volunteers need a clear understanding of the jobs they are expected to do plus a reasonable expectation of where their efforts will lead them and their organization. Since volunteers in America seem to be well-educated (the Gallup survey revealed that out of 284 people interviewed, 75 percent who volunteer had a college education as opposed to only 25 percent of non-volunteers), they should be given chances to help plan their own programs and have access to new information and materials to improve their work skills. You may also get more "mileage" from your volunteers if their jobs are occasionally rotated with others to provide variety and new learning opportunities.

Many local shelters and humane societies have developed useful and interesting volunteer programs that utilize people of all ages--from children to the elderly--while serving the needs of both cities and rural farmlands:

The City of Los Angeles' Department of Animal Regulation (200 N. Main St., Room 1650, Los Angeles, CA 90012) is currently recruiting volunteers for its new "reserve animal-control officer" program.

Energy conservation is a problem that the chilly Fairbanks North Star Borough Department of Animal Control (P.O. Box 1267, 520 Fifth Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99707) is working vigorously to solve through use of a newly constructed heat-recovery system. The system plans to use some of the money it saves by using the system, to further help animals.

The department started running the $260,000 system in September in an attempt to lower its annual outlay for energy ($16,000 was spent on propane for the crematory last year, while $20,000 went for heat, hot water and lights). "Despite temperatures that drop as low as 60 degrees below zero during December through February, we hope to annually save up to $15,000 of that $36,000 we spent last year in addition to any increased energy costs," said Robert E. Spencer, the department's director.

The system is made up of a York-Shipley stack boiler to rob the heat, with three super-insulated underground tanks to store the heat, using 12,000 gallons of water. When heat for the building is needed, a water-to-glycol heat exchanger places heat into the building's hydronic system. If domestic hot water is required, a separate water-to-water heat exchanger can be used. The system is backed up by a small oil-fired boiler in case the crematory shuts down for an extended period. (The crematory is a three-burner Sunbeam unit that is used four hours a day, which puts one and one-half million BTUs of propane-fired heat per hour into the air as waste.) It's estimated that the crematory only needs to be fired for three hours a day to provide the shelter with all the heat and hot water it needs. As an added bonus, the heat-recovery system is housed beneath a "much needed" garage that holds two vehicles and a work area.

"I estimate that we would have had to pay around $40,000 this year for energy if we didn't have this system," said Spencer. He recommends that other shelters who may consider such a system consult first with a municipal engineer or an energy consulting firm to see if it would be feasible and cost-effective. "Most
Shelter and humane-society workers can be prepared for 1983 with their choice of several calendars from the Bo-Tree Productions collection. Bo-Tree donates a portion of the profits from the sale of many of its calendars to The Humane Society of the United States and other organizations.

"In the Company of Cats" shows twelve felines posed in a variety of catlike activities and moods. The photos are full color. "Doggone! It's 1983" displays a variety of canines in twelve full-color photos, accompanied by descriptive quotes from various authors and philosophers. Both calendars measure 12" x 12", open to 12" x 24", and cost $6.95.

"Richard Stine's Average Cats and Random Dogs" calendar highlights each month with one of his witty illustrations of the daily trials and tribulations of various dogs and cats. This 8½" x 11" calendar costs $4.95.

The calendars would be terrific fund-raisers. When ordering in quantities of 12-47, subtract 40 percent from the retail price. For orders of 48 or more calendars, subtract 50 percent. Orders will be shipped F.O.B. (free on board with payment on delivery) from Phoenix, Ariz. If a check accompanies the order, freight is free. For single orders, add $1 for postage. A full-color catalogue is available upon request from the publisher. Write Bo-Tree Productions, 1137 San Antonio Rd., Suite E, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

The Wisconsin Humane Society (4151 North Humboldt Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212) has published a career book just for children to show what it is like to work in a humane society. Produced in cooperation with Information Systems and Services Inc. (ISSI), "Work With Us in a Humane Society" uses color photos and colorful drawings of children in realistic settings to illustrate the types of jobs and skills found in a humane society. The bold, large type is easy to read, and there is a glossary of terms in the back. "Our department is quite excited about it," said Lori L. Otto, the society's manager of education and publicity.

The book is available from ISSI (P.O. Box 1231, Milwaukee, WI 53201) or the Wisconsin Humane Society. Soft-cover editions cost $2.95 each. Prices for quantity orders reach as low as $2.50 each for 50 or more copies. In Wisconsin, add five-percent sales tax. For single copies, postage costs 75 cents. The society will figure the mailing costs separately for quantity orders. Hardcover editions cost $5.95 each. Quantity discounts can be arranged.

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The city developed the program in order to increase its community animal-control services without spending additional public funds. The volunteers will wear the same uniform and have the same responsibilities as the city's regular, paid animal-control officers.

"Mayor Tom Bradley and the 15 city council members are 100 percent behind the program," said Robert Rush, the department's general manager. "This is a big city. We impounded approximately 87,000 dogs during fiscal year 1981-82. Over three million people live in 465 square miles. We are taking this extra step to reach into the community to solve some animal-control problems."

The reserve officers will work with the same uniform and have the same responsibilities as the city's regular, paid animal-control officers. The reserve officers will enforce state and local laws dealing with the care, treatment, impoundment and quarantine of domestic and wild animals; pick up sick, injured or stray animals; euthanize animals in the field when necessary, issue citations, make arrests, maintain records, prepare reports and appear as witnesses in court when required. The reserve officers must serve a minimum of 18 hours a month and work various shifts, including weekends and holidays, at any of the six Los Angeles area shelters.

The city's requirements for the volunteer positions are strict. Applicants must be 21 years old and high school graduates, and they must have a valid California driver's license. They must also pass a psychological profile, a physical agility test and an interview. No one will be considered who has been convicted of a felony, has a history of criminal mistreatment of animals, or a record of frequent or serious traffic violations. After appointment, reserve officers must complete a 280-hour in-service training course conducted by the department.

"I see this program as a way for the volunteers to enhance their skills while serving the community," said Rush. "We will plan to reward their efforts by holding a recognition night once a year."

Approximately six active volunteer coordinators for the Allegany County SPCA (ACSPCA) (P.O. Box 381, Wellsville, NY 14895) are attempting to handle animal problems throughout the predominantly rural, 1,000-square-mile area. The program has been extremely effective in some of the communities and not so in others, according to ACSPCA representative, Bina Robinson.

"Success varies with the dedication and ability of the coordinator," said Robinson. "Our organization is so poor that we don't even have a telephone or office, to say nothing of a shelter. We board stray and abandoned animals that are brought to our attention with these efforts as well as with adoptions, fund-raising efforts, public education, and promotion of responsible animal ownership.

"I think the idea is a sound one for organizations trying to cover a large area as we are," said Robinson. "A [community] approach accomplishes more for the animals than trying to prosecute owners for neglect, because the area is so rural that the justice is likely to be a relative or have some other connection with the culprit. It is also more convenient for the public to ask for help [locally] without making a long-distance phone call."

A new legislative volunteer program at the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley (2530 Lafayette St., Santa Clara, CA 95050) is prompting three or four telephone calls per week from interested citizens, according to Kathy Snow, legislative coordinator for the society.

"One day, as I sat writing letters on behalf of animal-welfare legislation, I suddenly realized that I could accomplish so much more with some help," said Snow. "She sent a questionnaire to the society's entire membership, inviting them to join the [legislative] volunteer program. Fifteen percent of the members responded and asked to be kept informed of current legislation. Fifteen percent of the members responded and asked to be kept informed of current legislation. Fifteen percent of the members responded and asked to be kept informed of current legislation. Fifteen percent of the members responded and asked to be kept informed of current legislation. Fifteen percent of the members responded and asked to be kept informed of current legislation."

Approximately 20 women, aged 25 to 61 years (many of them married), assist the eight paid workers spread between the shelter, an adoption center, and the spay/neuter clinic. Most work one day a week, but they also tend to "drop by" on their free days.

Although a lot of leeway is given to each volunteer, there are set rules that cannot be broken without the permission of Toni DeStefano, executive director. Each volunteer is given a manual to read and keeps a file of reference that explains procedures and regulations. The group checks the cats and dogs with a quality life. This type of arrangement should be viewed as a very temporary solution to the homeless animal problem."

ACSPCA volunteer coordinators join the program on their own or are recommended by someone in the society. Although Robinson said there is a high rate of "burnout" among new members and coordinators, she believes the coordinators have definitely helped to solve some of the society's problems in making long-distance contacts and handling rural investigations. Before the program started, ACSPCA board members talked in person or by telephone with potential clients in twenty-four states. Robinson estimates that the program has prompted three or four telephone calls per week from interested citizens. The Humane Society of Wichita County (Route 1, Box 107, Wichita Falls, TX 76301) is operated almost entirely by volunteers. Approximately 20 women, aged 25 to 61 years (many of them married), assist the eight paid workers spread between the shelter, an adoption center, and the spay/neuter clinic. Most work one day a week, but they also tend to "drop by" on their free days. Although a lot of leeway is given to each volunteer, there are set rules that cannot be broken without the permission of Toni DeStefano, executive director. Each volunteer is given a manual to read and keeps a file of reference that explains procedures and regulations.
Wichita County sponsors a "Junior Humane Society Workshop." Thirty-six youngsters, aged 10 to 14 for two hours. They bathed, brushed and combed the dogs, cats, ponies and goats, and they scrubbed water buckets and doused the dogs and cats with flea powder.

The program was highlighted by the opportunity for the children to take some animals to visit the elderly in nearby rest homes. The encounter provided chances for the youngsters, the elderly and the animals to learn more about one another.

In addition to these activities, the children viewed educational films about animals, met with animal-control officers and a veterinarian and learned about the problems surrounding stray or abandoned pets.

At the end of the program, the children were asked to fill out a questionnaire so that they could explain some of the things they learned. The youths also received certificates of attendance and recognition for their work plus a subscription to The HSUS children's magazine, Kind.

In its winter 1982 publication, VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement reported that Women In Community Service (WICS) (950 N. Beauregard St., Suite 108, Alexandria, VA 22311) created a "volunteer orientation portfolio" (VOP) to help recruit and orient its new volunteers. The VOP is designed to be comprehensively attractive, durable, easily updated and expanded, inexpensive to produce and reproduce, and economical to mail. WICS believes many of its ideas for the portfolio could be adapted for use by other organizations.

WICS' VOP is a 60-page, three-ring binder with the group's logo silkscreened on the cover. Except for a few pages containing photographs and artwork printed at an instant print shop, the entire VOP was produced in-house, using clip art, a typewriter, transfer lettering and a photocopier. The group spent only $15 to produce a quantity of 200 VOPs.

The VOP contains an index of 40 volunteer jobs, followed by corresponding one-page job descriptions in numerical order. If a prospective volunteer is interested in job no. 28, for example, he or she can turn to page 28 to read the job description. A box at the bottom of the page explains ways the volunteer can tell when the job has been successfully completed. The job description page can be removed from the VOP, photocopied for the new volunteer, and returned to its place.

All of the VOP's 20 pages are protected inside a clear plastic pocket page with a side opening. Three holes are pre-punched on a margin outside the pocket to avoid ruining the printed material. The pockets also make it easy to insert new information. Each time a newsletter is published, for instance, the old issue can be removed and replaced with a new one.

From cover to cover, the VOP provides a prospective volunteer with an overview of the organization. It offers a variety of...
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information such as staff and facilities photos, logos, quotes from organizational bylaws, a map of the United States that shows field offices, a newsletter and a certificate of volunteer recognition. Volunteers who are given a clear understanding of an organization’s goals before they sign on are more likely to provide better assistance and a firmer commitment to the group.

No matter how large or small your humane society or animal shelter, volunteers can do much to help you and to educate the public about animal welfare. But to do their best, volunteers must have your active support, with interesting and constructive programs and assignments.

A copy of the 18-page status report that contains the Gallup survey results is available from Volunteer Readership, P.O. Box 1807, Boulder, CO 80306.

Reminder...
Make certain that volunteers (and staff members) are adequately covered by your organization’s liability insurance and workman’s compensation whether working on or off your property.

With humane-society and shelter workers increasingly taking pets to visit the elderly in nursing homes, with their daily handling of pets out in the field, insurance coverage that is limited to your organization’s property is just not enough. Call a reliable insurance agent today, and start the new year safely.

A Florida man was sentenced to 60 days in jail, a $1,000 fine and a psychological evaluation for training his two pit bull dogs to fight and draw blood by killing a neighbor’s cat, according to a report in the Fort Lauderdale News (Friday, July 23, 1982). This reportedly marked the first time someone has been jailed for animal abuse in Broward County.

Levi Farber, 24, of Sunrise, Fla., pleaded guilty in January and was sentenced by Broward County Court Judge John T. Luzzo for provoking his dogs to kill Boots, a six-year-old cat owned by Connie Freund. News Staff Writer Joe Kollin reported that the judge called Farber’s actions a “heinous and disgusting” incident that showed a “complete disregard for the life of another living being….I think society needs to be protected from him.”

According to Kollin, Farber placed Boots in a gunny sack and urged his dogs to attack and kill her. Farber later opened the sack and dumped the cat on the floor. Although suffering from a broken back, Boots fought the dogs until they killed her.

The case brought sympathetic outcries from friends and strangers to Freund, who burst into tears when she heard the courtroom account of her pet’s death, reported Kollin. Freund had rescued Boots five years earlier from beneath a car in her neighborhood.

WANTED - Shelter manager. Experience and humane commitment required. Start Jan. 1, 1983, or asap. For position description write Ms. Chris Long, President, Lawrence Humane Society, Box 651, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Tell Us About Your Year:
While looking ahead to the new year, many of you can proudly list an accomplishment or two your humane society or shelter achieved in 1982. We’d like to hear about them as well as to share some of them with other Shelter Sense readers. So, take a moment to write us with all the good news!

YES, we did a good job and we’re proud of it!

Name ____________________________
Organization ____________________________
Address ____________________________ Telephone ( )

Our success story is about
fund raising and/or public relations
animal care and handling
law enforcement/cruelty convictions
shelter management/shelter construction
adoptions
humane education
other ____________________________

Here’s how it worked:
What we did ____________________________
How we did it ____________________________
When we did it ____________________________
What the problems were ____________________________
What the results were ____________________________
What mistakes we made ____________________________

If you’ve sent us a clear black and white photo, can we keep it and reuse it in Shelter Sense? ______

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Like many people, you will probably stop for a moment as 1982 draws to a close to review the year's rewards and achievements and make your resolutions for 1983. But, don't just consider this a momentary tradition. For now is the time you should sit down to design a 1983 program -- considering the failures and successes of 1982 -- that will benefit your organization, the animals, and the community.

Gather your staff together and talk about the things you accomplished in 1982. List the three goals that you would most like to achieve for your organization in 1983. Make them reasonable, constructive goals: increased dog (and cat) licensing, more thorough cruelty investigations, greater spay/neuter incentives, and better, more interesting public education programs.

This is a time when budgets are being slashed right and left. More than ever, you need to find ways to make money for your organization. Don't lock yourself into the "everyone knows what we are doing" syndrome. Take a look at your educational and public-relations materials. Design new ones or upgrade the ones you now use. Discuss better ways to advertise your organization. Remember that new people have moved into your community; others need an occasional strong reminder about responsible pet ownership.

Review your volunteer programs. As we point out in this issue, volunteers can provide you with years of valuable service. But, you must create useful and interesting volunteer programs in order to increase volunteers' skills and dedication and help your organization grow. Be certain that you protect your volunteers -- and your organization -- with adequate insurance and workman's compensation to cover mishaps that occur off as well as on your property.

Your organization can move forward. You can make 1983 the best year ever! •