Dorothy Frary is a veteran animal welfare advocate in Ft. Wayne, IN. Using information from HSUS animal control workshops and other sources, she organized a 10-month campaign to establish a public low-cost spay/neuter clinic there. Her report includes useful ideas for other groups trying to generate public support for reduced fee pet sterilization:

I first selected a spay/neuter program I thought would apply to my community, which has a municipally-operated shelter. I chose the spay/neuter program carried out by the City of Los Angeles*, sent for complete information on their clinics and program and studied it thoroughly.

Then I selected the member of the Ft. Wayne City Council I thought would be the most interested and sympathetic. I met with her to explain the program and gave her a copy of the information from Los Angeles to take home and study at her leisure.

*Los Angeles, CA
Dog-only licensing ruled OK

Los Angeles Superior Court Appellate Department judges have ruled that dog licenses can be required in a community, even though cat licenses are not. The Los Angeles Times reported that the ruling was made when a citizen convicted of a misdemeanor for failing to license his dogs appealed the conviction.

The resident claimed the license ordinance violated the equal protection clause of the US Constitution because cat owners are not also required to license their pets. He contended that the city raises about $1.5 million from dog licensing, but spends more than a third of that controlling cats.

The judges ruled that this does not make the ordinance unconstitutional, and that classifying animals for licensing is not prohibited by the equal protection clause. The Times quotes their opinion as saying, "The remedy of the dog owner who feels that cats should also be licensed is in another arena — the legislative and executive departments of the City of Los Angeles."

Bringing older people together with pets benefits both in a program co-sponsored by the American Humane Education Society (AHES) and the Junior League of Boston.

For three years, the two groups have been placing pets in rest homes, adding a dimension to the residents' lives and providing good homes for the animals.

The Junior League makes the initial telephone contact with the nursing homes and meets with the administrator. If the first meeting is favorable, AHES representatives then visit the nursing home to show slides on pet ownership to the residents. They take a pet along to observe the reactions of the elderly people to an animal.

AHES Director Judith Star says it is important that "the residents and the administrators...be made aware of potential problems and natural inconvenience of owning a pet. Many people who have had little experience with animals think they are made of plastic. If the people involved in the program are not enthusiastic and well-prepared, the animal will be returned and the program will be discredited."

If the meeting is successful, AHES then selects from the Massachusetts SPCA animal shelters a medium-size short hair dog, at least two years old, housebroken and generally quiet. It is observed for a few days, then health-checked and bathed. Then it is "adopted" by the nursing home administrator, who takes responsibility for the animal, and taken to its new home. Star observes that "most dogs can sense the frailties of older people and they instinctively become gentle with them. On the whole, this has been a most worthwhile program for everyone concerned."

For further details on starting a pet placement program, write American Humane Education Society, 350 S. Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130. For a list of publications on pet therapy and organizations with programs, write SHELTER SENSE, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Pet therapy helps the elderly

Two participants in San Francisco SPCA's pet therapy program share a moment. AHES offers a list of pet therapy programs.

I gave her about three weeks to consider the material and then called to ask what she thought of the program. I emphasized that it would be self-supporting and would make a meaningful contribution toward correcting the surplus animal problem in Ft. Wayne. The cost savings would be attractive to those who like animals and those who do not. Any elected official will recognize this as a vote-getting issue.

The council member was impressed enough to make a short radio presentation to explain the program. Later, she was instrumental in influencing other council members.

Next, I decided to go where the animal problems really exist: in the neighborhoods. Ft. Wayne has an organization of many neighborhood associations. The central-south section of the city has the Central-South Alliance of Neighborhood Associations, which would eventually become a major supporter.

I visited one of the neighborhood association presidents to explain the Los Angeles program and give him material to study. Again, after allowing ample time, I called to ask what he thought of it. He was impressed and invited me to lunch along with another neighborhood association president to discuss the program.

Both presidents pledged their support and help and gave me a list of the 60 neighborhood associations in the city. I sent each association the following endorsement to sign and return to me:

The members of Association are concerned with the stray animal population of the neighborhood. Animals which do not receive proper care and supervision present threats to our community. For reasons of safety and sanitation we see a need to eliminate uncontrolled animal breeding; therefore we support and endorse a low cost spay and neutering program for Ft. Wayne.

As I received the endorsements signed by the association officers, I made copies and sent one to each member of the city council along with information on the Los Angeles program. Accompanying the endorsements was a letter from a group of citizens asking the council to heed the endorsements and initiate an improved animal control program for Ft. Wayne. A letter to the city council president read in part:

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HSUS Director of Animal Sheltering and Control ................. Phyllis Wright
Editor, SHELTER SENSE .................................. Susan Bury Staufeer

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We are concerned about the financial burden for the community which is forced to pay for the care and almost inevitable destruction of unwanted animals. Much of this expense is required for the feeding and care of these animals during the time they are held for adoption and the killing and disposing of 95% that are not adopted or redeemed. The result is an unconscionable waste of life and a needless drain on public money.

I sent copies of the endorsements to area news media also. I developed a 20-minute talk on animal control and surplus animals and made myself available as a one-person speaker's bureau to the neighbors; then I organized a calling committee. When I scheduled a talk before an association, a caller would telephone the membership and urge them to attend.

The time had now come for the council and the community to be exposed to real professionalism in animal control. A special hearing on animal control was called for members of the council, officials of the neighborhood associations, the press and other interested persons. I arranged for a panel of experts to come to Ft. Wayne to make presentations on the importance of reduced fee pet sterilization.

The panel included C. Jack Homes, of the Vancouver Branch, British Columbia SPCA; Dr. Betty Brockman, veterinarian at the Humane Society of Huron Valley clinic in Ann Arbor, MI; and Katie Flood, animal control expert from The HSUS.

Robert Rush, director of animal control for Los Angeles, spoke to the hearing participants by long distance telephone connected to a public address system. All the presentations were excellent and offered this community a completely new concept in animal control.

My goal to improve animal control in Ft. Wayne has been reached in part. Area veterinarians have opened a reduced fee clinic, with the following fees for pet sterilization: female dogs $25-30 (depending on size), female cats $25, male dogs $18, male cats $12. Vaccinations are required before sterilization, which increases the price.

A new animal control bill is being drafted for presentation to the city council. Also, an animal control committee within the neighborhood associations is being organized. This group is discussing reductions of the fees at the clinic, possibly with municipal funding. They also plan to seek further guidance from other communities that have successful spay/neuter programs.

* Los Angeles Animal Control reduced the number of animals destroyed at city shelters from 111,000 in 1970-71 to 69,419 in 1977-78 with a comprehensive program of city-sponsored spay/neuter clinics, public education and strict law enforcement. For information, write City of Los Angeles, Department of Animal Regulation, 111 East First St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

** See June 1978 SHELTER SENSE for information on the Vancouver spay/neuter clinic. The address is Vancouver Regional Branch, British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 1205 E. 7th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1R1.

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SHELTER SENSE SURVEY

Please take a moment to fill out this 2-page questionnaire and return it to SHELTER SENSE in the envelope provided in this issue. The information will help us develop more articles and features to assist you as you improve animal control programs for your community.

If animal control is the responsibility of another organization or agency, please ask them to complete the survey.

Please return the survey as soon as possible -- the results will appear in a future issue. Thank you!

Your name ____________________________ Your position __________________________

Organization __________________________

Address ______________________________

Number of people in area your shelter serves _______________________________

Number of licensed dogs _______________________________

Your estimate of total number of dogs and cats _______________________________

SHELTER STATISTICS

Give numbers for the most recent year available; give year __________

(m - male; f - female)

turned in

picked up

returned to owners

adopted

bite cases euthanized

dogs

m

f

pups under 4 mos.

m

f

cats

m

f

kittens under 4 mos.

m

f

SPAY/NEUTER

1. Do you have a spay/neuter clinic or program? clinic _______ program ________

2. If not, is either available through another agency in your area? yes _______ no ________

3. If not, is a clinic or program being planned? yes _______ no ________