Humane societies increasingly find it easy and effective to publicize educational messages on outdoor billboards. Billboards are large, attractive, and they cater to a captive audience. Many societies have discovered that a billboard's space, artwork, and printing can be arranged for free or at a reduced price. All local organizations should consider this method of advertising.

According to Meryl Davids, in "Doing WELL by Doing GOOD," an article in the July 1987 "Public Relations Journal," the number of advertising agencies that donate their time for public service campaigns is increasing. She described, as an example, an award-winning campaign about dogs in hot cars, donated to a humane society by an advertising agency. She said the society paid only $300 for film processing.

Continued on next page
Dear Sir/Madam:

As a concerned resident of this community, I wish to go on record as having personally delivered a stray cat found in this community to the Humane Animal Welfare Society in Waukesha (HAWS) for care.

I feel that the enforcement of animal control ordinances should be the responsibility of this municipality, not private citizens. I would urge you to enact and enforce a stray animal ordinance as a matter of public health and safety and in the interest of responsible pet ownership.

Signature

Address

Phone

The Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County Inc. (81 W24343 Northview Road, P.O. Box 834, Waukesha, WI 53187) recently set up five billboards to display a message about the dangers of letting cats and dogs stray and the benefits of spaying and neutering them. According to Romey Schoeninger, editor of the society's newsletter, the advertising company that owns the billboards charged the society only $400 for their use instead of its normal $2,600 fee. The society was given a month to display its advertising, or longer if there were no other customers. One billboard still is standing. Artwork for the project cost the society another $400, so it asked the county veterinary medical association to help with the $800 expense. The association gave the organization $200.

In recent years, the society has recorded an increase in the number of area stray cats. The group impounded 943 stray cats and kittens in 1986, said Schoeninger, and only one of 22 municipalities paid the society for its effort. The group has designated "Prevent a Litter Month," which shall be an annual event. We also have asked the U.S. Congress to officially designate April as "Prevent a Litter Month."

We're committed to sharing the burden of pet overpopulation with local animal shelters, which know already about the millions of animals that end up in alleys or as victims of disease, starvation, and abuse. The cause of the problem is the prevailing attitude of people that cats and dogs are disposable, to be cared for only when convenient, thrown away when not. An overabundance of puppies and kittens and common acts of cruelty are signs of this attitude. The tragic result is tremendous suffering by animals.

But this campaign depends on public involvement. You can help to spread the message about the tragedy of allowing unwanted animals to be born. Animal shelters should be receiving a set of campaign posters which were mailed recently. We ask you to post them on community bulletin boards, in schools, and at civic centers (if you need more, they can be ordered from The HSUS). Soon, shelters will be sent a packet of information about the campaign, including suggestions for celebrating the upcoming April "Prevent a Litter" month. And we've developed an annual awards program to recognize organizations for their effective programs in keeping with the "Be a Pal" campaign, including an award to hang on the shelter wall.

Please join The HSUS in this all-out effort to educate people about the need to end the births of unwanted puppies and kittens. Together we can make a difference! For more information, write to "Be a Pal" Campaign, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. N.W., Wash., DC 20037.

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Snakes: They can Benefit People

Part one

The fourth article in a series about humane solutions to wildlife problems that began with the March 1987 issue.

Of all the wild animals people consider to be "pests," none are less deserving than snakes. Actually, snakes are among the most inoffensive, elusive animals found in urban and rural areas. A good case can be made for snakes as one of nature's most beneficial animals! Most are harmless to everything except their natural prey, such as small rodents. Snakes eat many nice and rats, thereby reducing the numbers of these animals. Snakes don't cause structural damage to buildings, raid vegetable gardens, or disfigure yards. So, a family should consider itself fortunate to have snakes around the farm or home.

Of course, some snakes use venom to subdue their prey, and their bites also are capable of causing serious injury or death to humans. About 20 people in the United States die annually from snakebites, but many of these accidents result from people mishandling poisonous snakes or foolishly treating snakebites with home remedies. Most snakes, if treated with caution, present no threat to humans.

Few other creatures provoke such intense fear in so many people. Although people sometimes destroy snakes in self-defense, most often they kill them -- tens of thousands each year -- without reason. Some people try to live harmoniously with snakes. Growing numbers of Americans recognize that snakes, like other animals, have the right to exist. These people seek gentle ways of coping with those that cross their paths. It is possible to remove snakes without causing them harm, and the common sense approach to snake control may be the most practical way to cope with these reptiles.

IDENTIFYING POISONOUS SNAKES

Few snakes native to the U.S. are venomous. Unfortunately, there is no physical feature or marking that enables a person to recognize every poisonous snake. The best way to identify snakes is to learn to recognize common local snakes by studying a field guide to reptiles and by visiting a zoo or nature center with live specimens on display.

Several characteristics are common to poisonous snakes that inhabit the U.S. They serve as a useful guide for identifying poisonous snakes in the field.

In this country, there are four basic kinds of poisonous snakes: copperheads, coral snakes, rattlesnakes, and cottonmouth snakes, which, in some locations, are known as water moccasins.

The characteristic that distinguishes a pit viper from other snakes is its heat sensory pits, which appear as a tiny hole on each side of the snake's face between its eye and nostril. The shape of the eye pupil also may be helpful in identifying poisonous snakes. Pit vipers have elliptical eye pupils. Each pupil is shaped like a vertical slit, similar to a domestic cat's eyes. Most, but not all, nonpoisonous snakes have round pupils which more closely resemble dogs' eyes.

Obviously, it would be foolish to closely examine a snake's face in order to determine whether or not it is venomous. But pit vipers have another feature not commonly found in our native non-poisonous snakes. The head of a pit viper is triangular and broader than its neck. Most nonpoisonous snakes have heads which blend in size with their bodies.

Although they are not pit vipers, coral snakes also are easy to identify. A coral snake does not have a triangular head or elliptical pupils, but its body is marked with brilliantly colored rings of black, yellow, and red. Each band of black and red is bordered on both sides by narrow yellow rings.

People should be cautious around a snake displaying any of the physical features associated with poisonous species. Nevertheless, neither the shape of a snake's head or pupils nor its coloring guarantees that it is dangerous to people. Some harmless snakes appear or behave similar to their poisonous kin. It can be very difficult to tell them apart.

The scarlet snake and scarlet king snake, for example, have markings similar to coral snakes. The color pattern, however, is
reversed on these nonpoisonous species. Each yellow and red band is bordered on both sides by narrow rings of black. An easy way to remember which species is poisonous is to think of a traffic signal. If the red and yellow bands are touching, they signal you to “stop” because it is a coral snake.

Some harmless snakes, such as garter snakes and water snakes, as well as the young of other nonvenomous species have heads that may appear triangular to inexperienced observers. When molested, the common hog-nosed snake spreads its hood into a triangular shape and hisses. The hog-nosed snake is actually docile. It will try another trick. It will roll onto its back and play dead.

In many circumstances, an expert can tell on sight whether or not an individual snake is poisonous. But, if there is any doubt, one should assume the snake is poisonous and avoid it.

Some people claim that a copperhead snake can mate with a nonpoisonous black rat snake and produce offspring that look harmless but can kill with their bites. This, one of many legends about snakes, is a biological impossibility.

THE CASE AGAINST KILLING SNAKES

In most states, nonpoisonous snakes are classified as non-game, wildlife and are protected by state law. Such snakes may not be killed legally unless they are damaging property or causing a nuisance. A special permit may be required from the district game warden before a snake is destroyed. It is pointless, however, to kill a snake simply because it ventures into a yard or farm.

Most snakes reproduce by laying eggs. Depending upon the species and habitat, the eggs may be deposited in sand, mulch, sawdust, or other material that provides the warmth and moisture needed to incubate the eggs. Generally, a snake will lay seven to 10 eggs, but some species can produce as many as 25 eggs. The eggs are often forgotten, left to hatch by themselves. The length of incubation varies from several weeks to several months but averages approximately 60 days. At birth, each young snake is on its own. Snakes are not very mobile and do not wander far in search of a suitable place to live. A snake readily will reside in a yard or on a farm if the property meets its habitat requirements.

Snakes of some species give birth to live young. Actually, the eggs are retained inside a female’s body until they complete development. Even these species do not tend their young. The newborn snakes immediately leave their mother to hunt for food and shelter.

Since snakes are elusive, no matter how intent a homeowner is on finding them from a yard, it is doubtful he or she will find all of the animals that inhabit the area. As survivors mature and bear their own young, the species may become firmly established in the neighborhood. If the homeowner succeeds in eliminating all snakes in the immediate area, this effort may be futile. If the land is near snake habitat, snakes occasionally will cross the property, no matter what steps are taken to keep them away. Moreover, if the property offers attractive accommodations, it soon may be discovered by other snakes, who will move there. It can become an endless cycle, with snakes maturing, and populating a yard, as fast as they can be hunted.

Next, learn about snake-proofing a home, coping with nonpoisonous snakes in the home, and reacting to poisonous snakes.

A Virginia furniture company official recently was ordered to donate $500 to an animal-rights organization after being convicted of ordering another employee to throw a box of five four-week-old kittens into a plant incinerator. Three of the kittens were burned to death, but two survived in the incinerator for over eight hours by crawling in an ash pit, away from the flames.

According to Alvinia Pitches, executive director of the Martinsville-Henry County SPCA (P.O. Box 3262, Martinsville, VA 24112), Michael D. DeHart, 34, assistant plant manager at Bassett Superior Lines, was found guilty of cruelty to animals in Henry County, Va., General District Court on August 5. Pitches said DeHart testified that three of the kittens were dead before he placed them in the box, two others were motherless and malnourished, and he was trying to dispose of them humanely. Witnesses testified that all five kittens were alive, healthy, and not abandoned by the mother when placed in the box. The employee who tossed them into the incinerator reportedly was told the box contained important papers, which had been shredded, and was not to be opened.

Pitches said another plant employee discovered the surviving kittens in the incinerator and reported the burnings to the SPCA. DeHart later was arrested by State Trooper H.C. Guilliams after the SPCA reported the incident to state police. The surviving kittens, which suffered numerous second- and third-degree burns, have recovered and been placed in new homes by the SPCA.

A new rabies clinics kit was distributed free to every town and city in Massachusetts last summer in time for the state’s June Rabies Prevention Week. Legislation has been filed to make this an annual event to stress the importance of vaccinating pet cats and dogs.

Developed by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) (350 S. Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130), the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association (200 Westboro Rd., N. Grafton, MA 01536), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (150 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02111), the kit is part of a program of public awareness for this event, according to MSPCA Director of Education Judy Golden. The kit contains a large four-color poster of a dog's face, with the slogan, “Would you let man's best friend become an enemy?”

Continued on next page
Vaccinate your pets against rabies.* The poster includes generous space for placing the date, time, and location of an individual clinic; declares June 7-13, 1987, as Rabies Prevention Week; and includes the name of the three sponsoring organizations.

According to Golden, the artwork for the poster was chosen from among entries to a statewide Rabies Prevention Poster Contest, conducted in junior and senior high schools earlier this year. The kit also includes an Annual Pet Health Check List (one for dogs; one for cats), guidelines for running a rabies clinic, sample press releases and public service announcements, and a Public Health Fact Sheet on rabies, to be distributed to clinic participants.

A local humane society and Giant Food Inc. recently collaborated on a project to educate milk consumers about the need to spay and neuter pets.

The Washington Humane Society (7319 Georgia Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20013) and Giant Food Inc. (Dept. 599, Box 1804, Washington, DC 20013) worked together to develop a public service message to fit on the side of a one-quart carton of Giant brand milk. The message included a photograph of a cat and dog, information about the pet overpopulation problem, and the suggestion that consumers call their veterinarian or the humane society to arrange to have their cats or dogs spayed or neutered.

According to Holly Hazzard, member of the board of directors of the humane society, she pursued the idea with Barry Scher, Giant's director of public affairs, who said he has two dogs and would be happy to provide such a community service. Hazzard arranged for him for placing the message on the milk cartons. Said Scher, "We hope you will not hesitate to contact us."

A new book of poetry and prose describes one woman's view of how reverence for life affects animals, nature, and other people.

The paperback volume would be attractive as a holiday fund-raiser.

*No Room, Save in the Heart,* by Ann Cottrell Free, contains five chapters of poetry and prose with titles such as "The House of Life," "The Quality of Mercy," and "The Ways of Love." Within the chapters, "Little Ant," "Dead Dog," "Lost Dog," "Pet Shop Monkey," "Ladies in Fur Coats," and many other selections probe the important issues surrounding all life.

Phyllis Wright, HSUS vice president, has described the book this way: "Once again, Ann has proven the pen is mightier than the sword.... This book touches your consciousness."

Fall hiking and camping can be an adventure for some people, but that shouldn't include pets that become ill, injured, or lost. A new brochure can help hikers and campers understand proper pet safety and care outdoors.

Written by M. Kathleen Prevost, the brochure was produced by the Lake County Human Education and Awareness Board, a nonprofit corporation. The brochure helps pet owners to prepare for emergencies, first aid, and back country adventures as well as routine travel or vacations.

To order one copy, send 50 cents and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Hiking and Camping, Salt Lake County Humane Education and Awareness Board, 511 W. 3900 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84123. Two or more copies, including postage, are available: $15 for 50 brochures; $25 for 100; $35 for 250; and $50 for 500. Allow four to six weeks for delivery.

A new catalog of films and videotapes about animals and animal-related issues is available free of charge. Each film can be rented or purchased and would be useful for school presentations, scout gatherings, church programs, civic meetings, and more.
A Little Help from Your Friends: Use Your User Groups
by Randall Lockwood

One of the things that prevents many organizations or individuals from getting started in computing is fear. Computer "phobia" can take many forms: fear of making a financial mistake, fear of looking foolish in the eyes of others as you struggle to learn new skills, or fear of losing some control over the shelter functions that have long been done by you. These fears can be compounded by the fact that the people who can help you to overcome them often seem to speak an alien language. Last month's "Computer Talk" explored one way of finding help, namely through the use of professional consultants. Another approach is to take advantage of the talent and experience that can be found in the growing number of local and national computer user groups.

Contrary to the stereotype of the computer expert as someone who is cold and disinterested in anything other than the strange workings of his machines, there are many warm, friendly, accessible people out there eager to help you join the ranks of the computer literate. Many of these people can be located by getting involved with user groups.

There are many different kinds of organizations available. Nearly all of them can be of some help to you. Some groups share information about a particular machine (for example, IBM, Macintosh, Tandy). Others focus on the use of a particular piece of software (for example, Lotus, DBase III). Some groups are based on specific applications of computer technology (for example, education, veterinary medicine, publishing).

User groups vary widely in their degree of organization. They range from collections of five or six people who chat now and then, to well-established groups of several hundred or more who have regular meetings, special events, newsletters, electronic bulletin boards, and message services.

A common feature of most of the larger groups is a readily accessible group of experts on nearly every aspect of computing. One person, for example, may be designated as the person to contact if you are having problems with printers; another may be a specialist in database programs; a third may be the local authority on editing newsletters by computer. Most of these people are willing to share their expertise simply for the enjoyment of putting their skills to use. If they can contribute to a worthy cause in the process, they will be motivated even more to help.

What Can User Groups Do for You?
If you are new to computing, members of a local group can help you over some of the hurdles of computerization. They can help you assess your needs and suggest suitable hardware so that you can solicit bids from vendors or go to a professional consultant with the proper questions. They often can steer you to the best local dealers. People in local user groups also may assist you in customizing software to your specific needs. User groups often maintain libraries of "public domain" software which can be duplicated for members. These may include programs for word processing, database management, and other applications.

Many of these programs are as good as commercial software costing hundreds of dollars.

How Can You Find a User Group?
The business section of most major newspapers features a calendar of computer-related events, including classes, product demonstrations, and user group meetings. This is a good way to find out about an organization that might be helpful. In addition, the monthly magazine Computer Shopper, available at most newstands, lists hundreds of user group meetings. Local computer dealers usually know about most local groups and even may sponsor one in the area. Since many members of such groups are students or teachers, you often can locate a group by contacting the computer science departments of colleges or universities in your area.

Once you have located the right kind of organization, introduce yourself and describe the kind of assistance you might need. Ask if you can make an appeal for volunteers at one of the meetings. Most of all, don't feel intimidated by these groups. Remember, there was a time in the life of every computer expert when he or she knew nothing about computers!
Federal Bill Reaffirms Wildlife Sanctuaries

On June 18, 1987, Rep. Bill Green of New York introduced important legislation in the U.S. Congress to ban sport hunting and recreational/commercial trapping on the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is operated by the federal government. Known as the "Refuge Wildlife Protection Act" (HR 2724), the bill would also reaffirm that our National Wildlife Refuges are created and publicly supported as inviolate sanctuaries to protect and enhance wildlife, and require that all wildlife directly affected by Refuge programs be treated in the most humane manner possible.

Over half the nation's 439 Refuges allow sport hunting and nearly a quarter permit recreational/commercial trapping. Over 400,000 wild animals are killed and wounded each year. So you can see how necessary this legislation is! The HSUS and other animal-protection groups are strongly supporting HR 2724 and working for its passage. You can help by putting up a petition on your bulletin board and having people sign it to show their support for this humane and enlightened legislation. For a free package containing petitions and background information, please write or call

National Wildlife Refuge Campaign
The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 452-1100

Some of you may have received a summer mailing from The HSUS, asking for your support. To all who responded, thank you! For the rest of you, we'd love to have your support, too. 

Shelter director needed for small humane society. Must have five years of job-related experience, versatility, office skills, and supervisory ability. Send resume and references to Dorchester County Humane Society, P.O. Box 132, Cambridge, MD 21613.

Only Shelter Sense subscribers may advertise. Ads must be submitted on your organization's letterhead no later than six weeks before month of issue. Please limit to 35 words (including address). Sorry, we cannot print "position wanted" ads.

Advocates establishing a fee for cat impoundment. It has asked local citizens to write or call their officials about the problem of stray cats in the area. Schoening believes pressure from constituents is, in part, responsible for cat restraint and licensing legislation already before city officials and is confident an impoundment measure will follow.

Avery County, N.C., has no government-sponsored animal-control program. According to Alice Pyatte, treasurer of the Avery County Humane Society (P.O. Box 323, Newland, NC 28657), the society recently received $15,000 to build an animal shelter in this mountainous area. Its efforts also are targeted at obtaining financial help for spaying and neutering and for an education program in the local schools, according to Ruth T. Greene, former president of the society. The society has widely publicized the crime of animal abandonment and has erected a number of billboards. The state's animal-cruelty statute, which increased the penalties for abandonment and other violations, effective last October, contains a section that increased the penalties for abandonment of animals (this can include leaving an animal at a dumpster or at a former residence). The new law raises the fine from $200 to $500 and includes imprisonment of up to six months.

The billboards -- 10 produced in 1985 at a cost to the society of only $450 -- have been made possible by the generosity of the Appalachian Poster Advertising Company of Lenior, N.C., said Greene. When unrented billboard space is available, the company will display one of the society's messages free of charge. Pyatte said the North Carolina Humane Federation gave the society permission to use some of its slogans. So far, four billboards have been erected in different areas of the rural and small-town county. Many people in that area have summer and winter vacation homes. Some take in abandoned animals but leave them themselves when their vacations end.

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"Billboards ..."
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Shelter director needed for small humane society. Must have five years of job-related experience, versatility, office skills, and supervisory ability. Send resume and references to Dorchester County Humane Society, P.O. Box 132, Cambridge, MD 21613.

Only Shelter Sense subscribers may advertise. Ads must be submitted on your organization's letterhead no later than six weeks before month of issue. Please limit to 35 words (including address). Sorry, we cannot print "position wanted" ads.
Greene said "The Avery Journal" prints a weekly list of animals that need homes or have been lost and found, at no charge to the society. Pyatte added that the paper also prints a column about the humane society that is written by the society's president, Myra Brinkley.

In Montgomery County, Ohio, a 1987 dog license campaign has been underway for several months. As part of the campaign, the Stoff-Parrish Creative Group created a billboard displaying a drawing of a pet owner with his dog and the slogan, "Your Dog Would Buy A License For You ... It's The Law." The billboard gives the cost of a dog license and applicable dates, the shelter's name, and its telephone number. The agency has created the annual campaign bulletin board for four years, according to Jack Smith, manager of the Montgomery County Animal Shelter (6550 Webster St., Dayton, OH 45414). In addition, the Lamar Outdoor Advertising Company has provided five billboards in Montgomery County and two in Greene County, which is jointly participating in the campaign.

"We feel the billboards are highly effective," said Smith. "We've placed them in two or three key locations that are heavily traveled." Smith explained that a new license tag is "unveiled" each December 1 at the County building to kick off the campaign. The affair includes county commissioners and other dignitaries.

If a licensed and tagged dog is found, the animal shelter is required by law to hold it for 14 days. If it is brought in without a tag, it is held only for three days. Tags are available at the county auditor's office, the animal shelter, the humane society, and the Society for Improvement of Conditions for Stray Animals. Coupons for mail orders appear in most area newspapers during the campaign period.

In the summer of 1986, the Mississippi Animal Rescue League (MARL) (4395 South Drive, Jackson, MS 39209) used a billboard to remind citizens of Jackson that homeless pets from the city pound have been used in laboratory experiments by the University of Mississippi Medical Center ever since the city council voted to reinstate pound seizure. The billboard space, donated by Lamar Outdoor Advertising to MARL, was located adjacent to the University. Five other billboards, bearing the same advertisement, were located in other well-traveled areas of Jackson. MARL paid $250 to have the signs printed, and an artist donated the drawing.

"We received a very positive public response to the billboards," said Debra Boswell, director of MARL. "Even employees of the Medical Center told us they were impressed." Boswell added that the billboard's prime location across from the Medical Center reportedly caused some University officials to believe MARL had bribed the advertising company. In reality, MARL was on a waiting list for over one year in order to obtain space on one of the area's community service billboards. The fact that their billboard was located across from the University was just a coincidence, she said.

MARL hopes to obtain funding from various sources to continue its campaign to end pound seizure locally. Already the group has purchased airtime during rush hour to run five radio advertisements, an action Boswell said angered Jackson's mayor. It also has developed bumper stickers. Some MARL supporters voluntarily spend their own money to buy animals from the pound, thwarting Medical Center efforts, said Boswell. "We are asking the city council to repeal Jackson's pound seizure ordinance," she said. "Next year, there are local elections, so we'll see!"

There are many messages you can send to your community that can help improve life for animals and citizens. What better way to do this than to place them where people won't miss seeing them. Billboard messages, placed in well-traveled areas, have been developed inexpensively. Call your local advertising agency today to determine whether or not your organization can do the same.
Campaigns can be time-consuming, so you may be tempted just to concentrate on the million and one tasks you have to accomplish in the shelter today! But most campaigns, especially The HSUS' new "Be a Pal - Prevent a Litter" campaign described inside this issue, are too important to shrug off. Campaigns depend upon public support -- your support. Together we can improve the way animals are being treated in our society.

The "Be a Pal - Prevent a Litter" campaign means The HSUS is going all out to work with local shelters to educate citizens about the harm being done to cats and dogs when owners neglect to spay and neuter pets. When cats and dogs are spayed and neutered, the whole community -- people and animals -- benefits. Besides reducing the number of kittens and puppies that are born only to die because no one wants them, spay/neuter efforts mean your community will note fewer problems with dog bites or dog waste in parks and along sidewalks, and fewer public funds spent to round up and shelter stray animals.

This campaign needs your imagination, energy, and commitment. For example, what facts do you want your community to know? What action do you want citizens to take? What is the best method for you to educate them? Whom can you persuade to help you (a local sports figure, newscaster, community official, corporate executive)? Put those ideas into action! The HSUS wants to hear about your campaign-related programs and events. To help you, we've developed a packet of materials to start you in developing your own materials and activities. We're also sending you posters to display. Other materials will be sent to you as our campaign progresses.

"Be a Pal - Prevent a Litter" is more than a slogan, it is action needed now by the animals and citizens of your community.