Educating Through Outreach

By Geoffrey L. Handy

You're probably affiliated with a local humane society or animal control department that does some kind of community outreach. What is your agency’s outreach program like? Does it make the best use of its limited time and resources? Does it strive to reach all members of the community?

Questions like these should be asked by every humane organization and animal control agency from time to time. Evaluating the effectiveness of your community outreach program is an essential task that will ensure your agency is addressing the long-term needs of animals and the community itself.

"Even though your shelter is filled with people on Saturdays and other busy times, the majority of your community's public never comes through the shelter's doors," says Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals. "That's why you need an..."
outreach program that goes to them. Humane organizations and animal control agencies are a vital part of the community and need to be seen and heard in all facets of community life.”

Through effective outreach, you can go a long way towards maintaining the visibility of your organization and improving the plight of the animals in your community.

Include Information That Educates
When you consider what the elements of your community outreach program should be, you shouldn’t only think about public relations or your agency’s image and visibility in the eyes of the public. You also need to think about community awareness of animal problems.

Protecting the animals in your community means changing the attitudes of the people who own them. As the only organized animal protection agency in your community, you have a mandate to educate the public about responsible pet ownership, pet overpopulation, and other animal issues. “I hear shelters say, ‘Well, we don’t have the staff or the time to do much community education,’” says Wright. “The truth is, you don’t have time not to do it.”

Fortunately, PR and education aren’t mutually exclusive components of an outreach program.

The Basics of Outreach
Planning ahead is essential before your agency can effectively take its messages to the public. You need to decide what you want to say and how, where, and when you want to say it. Then you have to check your resources—time, money, and talent. To make your program work, you may need to recruit volunteers to help you.

To ensure outreach success, your agency must first establish a credible public image. Such an image begins with the organization itself—the attractiveness of its facility, the quality of its staff, and the consistency of the materials it produces. Every interaction you have with the public makes an impact and is an opportunity to educate. All staff members and volunteers must be knowledgeable about your policies and the animal issues you are addressing so that they are able to respond to and work with the public.

Be certain that the name of your agency and what it stands for is always communicated with consistency and professionalism. Develop a consistent logo or design to put on all the public information materials your agency produces.

You must also keep your organization’s name out in front of the public as much as possible. Don’t assume that everybody knows your agency or where it’s located. It is not enough to simply provide a booth at your county’s summer fair or the county bazaar.

A good way to set up the file is to install 12 folders, one for each month. In each folder, include a list of reminders and other information pertinent to that time of the year. Then before the beginning of every month, check the folder to see what public information campaign or other tasks you need to work on that month.

For example, the December folder might let you know that The HSUS’s “11th Annual Christmas Bazaar” is coming up, and that it’s time to begin your annual campaign to warn the public of the dangers of leaving pets in hot cars during the summer. The February folder might remind you to discourage the public from giving pets as Christmas gifts. April’s folder would tell you it’s time to begin your annual campaign to warn the public of the dangers of leaving pets in hot cars during the summer. The February folder might remind you to discourage the public from giving pets as Christmas gifts. April’s folder would tell you it’s time to begin your annual campaign to warn the public of the dangers of leaving pets in hot cars during the summer.

You want to achieve maximum visibility, but be careful not to constantly bombard the public with the same message day after day, either. After a time, any repetitive messages will become old, unnoticed, and ineffective. A distinct campaign (such as pet overpopulation) will be more effective if you vary your message over time. Change your copy and update your materials periodically.

Finally, your outreach programs—no matter how successful they appear to be—should be continuously evaluated for their effectiveness. What were your goals when you began? Have they been accomplished? Should they be changed in order to reach more people or have more impact?
Just remember that for every person you do reach, there are always more who you have not. People who typically participate in dog obedience classes, for instance, already care about being better pet owners. The other pet owners in your community, as a regular citizen, learn about the world around them mainly through a mix of tactics. Think about where and how you, as a regular citizen, reach, there are always more who you have not reached, there are always more who you have not seen, or rarely see—must also be reached.

Take Your Messages To the Public
That’s why you need to actively take your messages to the community. This involves using a mix of tactics. Think about where and how you, as a regular citizen, reach, there are always more who you have not seen, or rarely see—must also be reached.

Educational Outreach Made Easy
By Karol Syloco, Ph.D., NAHEE

humane educator in Washington, DC, was horrified. A young student at a public school had killed a cat and then urinated on it. When the educator called this to the attention of the school’s counselors, she was told there were more serious problems to be dealt with.

Community outreach through humane education, not only in the schools but also in the community, can be effectively reached in different ways. As a result, you’ll need to utilize the media for news stories and PSAs; speak from time to time at meetings of other community organizations or at your local library; distribute information wherever there is a “captured audience,” such as at doctor’s offices, set up educational booths at local fairs and shopping malls; put posters and materials in supermarkets and other businesses; and perhaps even pay even for advertising space in local newspapers or on billboards or buses. Finally, don’t overlook that large segment of the community whose major source of information is the classroom—children. Humane education in the schools should be a top priority of any humane organization or animal control agency.

"Childhood is where caring begins—and also selfishness and arrogance,” says Dr. Randy Lockwood, HSUS Director of Higher Education. Children who are taught to respect living things and be responsible pet owners will generally grow up to be adults with those same qualities. Community outreach and education involves changing attitudes. Making a difference at an early age means not changing attitudes, but forming them.

Six NAHEE publications in particular lend themselves to being shared in the community by your organization. “Breaking the Cycle of Abuse,” available in English or Spanish, introduces the concepts of animal and child abuse and explains that animal abuse is often related to violence against humans. The brochures are sold for $0.50 each or in packets of 15 for $2.75. KIND News, a newspaper for children, features stories, puzzles, contests, games, and other activities to teach children about animals and their humane treatment. Your organization may already be taking “adopt!” teachers, providing them with a complementary subscription. But how about “adopting” a hospital pediatric ward? Or ordering subscriptions to place in veterinarians’ or doctors’ waiting rooms? Don’t forget your own shelter’s adoption counter! Kind News comes in bundles of 32 copies. One year’s regular subscription (nine issues, one per month for each school) is $20 (adoptions are $18) and includes one issue of Kind Teacher, an educator’s guide featuring numerous reproducibles and quick activities for spare moments.

The Drop Everything Else, Read (DEER) kit contains a poster announcing “DEER Month” (any month set aside to encourage the reading of books about animals), recommended animal books, guidelines for judging books, and DEER symbols, bookmarks, and certificates for duplication. The kit costs $2. Your librarians and local camp counselors will thank you for providing them with a ready-made, interesting program.

Sharing Sam contains flannel story-board patterns and a script designed to introduce the young child (preschool through early elementary age) to the concept of proper pet care. Also included is "Rags: A Lesson Parents Will Thank You For," a lesson plan that shows children how to avoid being bitten by a dog. This kit is only $4 and is perfect as a gift to preschools, day-care centers, or as a community education course.

For an exceptional community project, order NAHEE’s “Playing TAG for Real” kit for $2. The TAG kit is designed to unite school children in a project to increase the number of pets licensed in their community. Why not involve a local civic club in the project as well? Or order “Pet Overpopulation: From Concern to Action.” The Port Wayne Department of Animal Control used ideas in this $2 kit to hold a successful “Happy No-Birth-Day” Party in a local mall, complete with cake, to highlight the need for spaying and neutering.

NAHEE is pleased to share its educational materials with other organizations. To order any one of these items, write the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education, 67 Salem Rd., East Haddam, CT 06423-0362, or call (203) 434-8666.

The Power of the Media: Making It Work for You
By Kathy Bauch, HSUS Field Representative and Freelance Public Relations Consultant

Whether you work in an animal shelter that deals mainly with dogs and cats or an organization that addresses a wide range of animal issues, you can’t be successful in bringing about positive change for animals unless your messages reach the public. One of the least expensive and most effective options is publicity—the process of getting your story into the media. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television serve as conduits between your organization and the public, providing the routes your messages take to get through to the people you want to reach.

You can talk to the media about a story idea for
You can get news about your organization—something you probably already know about the power of the press. The trick is to make it work for you.

To do that you have to understand something about how the media work. Begin with the fact that the media operate within a basic contradiction. Print and broadcast media need stories to fill their space and time but they also have a limited amount of space and time to fill. Consequently, there will be times that they will be receptive to relatively unimportant stories, and other times that a truly important idea gets rejected.

That’s one reason to keep in mind that your goal in working with the media is to develop a long-term relationship. You want the media to get to know your organization, to understand what it does, to be receptive when you call, and to call you as a source for issues concerning animals.

The basis of the relationship is familiarity. And just as you want the press and the public to become familiar with you and your issues, you have to get to know the media. That means keeping a list of the media in your community and the people who you should contact for different kinds of stories. You can compile your list from the phone book. But to really become familiar with the media, you have to read the newspapers, watch TV, and listen to the radio. That may sound obvious, but it’s surprising how many people who work with the media, even public relations professionals, don’t do it.

The more you know about the media, the more opportunities you’ll find to tell your story. And there’s almost always something to tell: new hours, changes in policy, special events, pet care tips, stories about rescues or special animals, visiting experts or celebrities, educational programs—the possibilities are virtually endless.

You’ll generally contact the media by phone or with a press release. You don’t have to be a great writer to produce a release. Just be clear and concise, and include as much of the essential information as possible in the first paragraph or two. There is a format for a press release; the most important elements are that it should be typed and double-spaced and include the name and phone number of your organization’s contact person should be near the top.

Contacting the media is only part of your relationship with the press. You also have to be prepared for the times that they call you, even when you’d prefer they didn’t. If someone is developing a story, they will do it with or without your help. Participating in the process is the only chance you have to exert any control over the outcome.

Whenever you talk to the press, regardless of who initiates the contact, keep these points in mind:

Avoid “no comment.” When people hear that, they assume that the speaker is hiding something. If you really can’t comment for legal or ethical reasons, say so. If you simply don’t have information when the question is asked, tell the reporter when you might have something to say. If you can’t comment but someone else could, refer the reporter to that person. If you just don’t know the answer, say so. If possible, offer to find out and get back in touch with the information.

Never, never, never lie to the press. When the truth comes out, as it generally does, it will be very public and very messy. And you can be sure that you won’t have a second chance with that reporter. This includes embellishing a story to get the press interested, in hopes they won’t notice later that it’s not quite what you promised. They will, and they won’t be happy. And they won’t quit trusting you the next time.

The underlying concept is credibility. The press is concerned about their credibility with the public, and they value credibility in their sources. Without it, there is no relationship.

Talking to the media can be intimidating, but you can minimize the discomfort with a little preparation. Before you are interviewed, concentrate on the key points you wish to make and on how to make themconcisely. The best way to avoid problems of misquotes and quoted being taken out of context is to say exactly what you want to say, and then stop. Saying too much just opens the door to confusion and misinterpretation.

There’s another way you can access the media, and that’s through the use of public service announcements (PSAs) on radio or television. They can be very effective, but if you have to produce the finished product yourself, it can get very expensive. Before you consider any kind of PSA, talk to the public service directors at the radio and television stations in your area. They can tell you what you need in terms of length of your message, type of message, and format. You may have to get lucky and find a public service director who has such an interest in your message that he or she will produce the spot for you. But at least you’ll get an idea of whether it’s worth the cost to you to produce and distribute a PSA.

Finally, accept the fact that working with the media can be very frustrating at times. Even when you have a great story and do everything right, it can be ignored or come out all wrong. Those may be the times that the temptation is the strongest to simply stop talking to the press. Don’t do it. In the long run, the momentary aggravations will be far outweighed by the benefits to your organization of an effective working relationship with the media.

Group Does Impressive Job of Spay/Neuter Outreach

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

Went twenty years ago, a group of seven volunteers at the Arlington Animal Welfare League in Virginia watched 53 “handsome and healthy” cats come into the shelter in just one Saturday afternoon. The cages were full. The carriers were full. Not one cat was adopted. The cats never had a chance. But these volunteers decided that day that somebody had to do something. So they did.

This was the beginning of SPAY, Incorporated (Society for the Prevention of Animal Young, P.O. Box 3240, Arlington, VA 22203). Now in its 21st year, this society has made a tremendous impact on pet overpopulation in its community and beyond. With no shelter, no clinic, and never more than a dozen volunteers, SPAY has garnered impressive results. Their outreach has extended from their home city of Arlington into all of Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and suburban Maryland.

Although SPAY’s founding members volunteered at a shelter, SPAY has never been affiliated with any shelter or humane society. They have done the work on their own. Eileen Galer, founder and president of...
of SPAY, has a very down-to-earth, independent attitude about getting their goals accomplished. "A lot of people form similar groups call us for advice," she says, "and they think you've got to have contracts with the vet and you've got to get grants and municipal funds. That's just nonsense. If you ask the vet to participate and he says 'yes,' that's it. We don't fool with grants—there are too many strings attached. We make our own money."

SPAY began with two participating veterinarians who agreed to spay and neuter pets for a low, fixed fee when they received a referral from SPAY. These fees, which have only increased once in their 21 years, begin at $30 to spay a cat and $35 to spay a small dog, including an overnight stay at the hospital. Fees to neuter males begin at $17.50 for cats and $25 for small dogs. Now SPAY has 12 participating veterinarians, and they arrange over 4,000 surgeries per year. Galer says, "Word of mouth."

With just one paid advertisement in a local paper 20 years ago, SPAY has gone from handling 93 requests their first year to 4,233 in 1989. When asked how SPAY publicizes its service, Galer says, "Word of mouth."

SPAY began by calling people who ran pet give-away ads in the paper, and they continue this practice. In addition, they leave business cards in pet shops and the local shelters. Whatever the means, the message gets out and the phone keeps ringing. The only paid member of SPAY is the person who answers the phone, and she currently makes up to 600 calls per month.

When a caller requests help in finding a low-cost surgery, SPAY refers him or her to the closest participating veterinarian. A certificate for the surgery is mailed to the caller, who then makes the appointment directly with the vet. SPAY handles none of the money, as the veterinarian receives payment when the animal is picked up after the surgery. (Shots or other required care is additional.) If the veterinarian can't collect the fee, he knows that SPAY will cover it. "We're professional," Galer says. "They never have any problems with us, and that keeps them satisfied with the arrangement."

Last year, SPAY provided $3,921 in assistance to those who couldn't afford to pay. Galer says they will cover the cost "because the pets deserve it, and if we don't do it, no one will."

The proof of SPAY's effectiveness lies in the statistics. Before they began in 1969, they have arranged for the sterilization of over 59,000 animals. Their veterinarians report that about 50 percent of the referred pets are pregnant. One veterinarian's experience is particularly enlightening: from 188 cats he aborted 899 kittens and from 32 dogs he took 242 puppies. And the Arlington shelter has seen a dramatic reduction in the numbers of pets euthanized since

### Getting the Neighborhood Involved in Spay/Neuter

I t's hard enough working for an animal shelter and having to see so many unwanted animals euthanized because there aren't enough homes for them. But when you see the animal control truck on your own street picking up stray and unaltered animals, it becomes almost too much. Phyllis Stein, founder and past president of the Chesapeake Humane Society (P.O. Box 15061, Chesapeake, VA 23320), had this experience. But rather than giving up, she decided to pull the neighborhood together and do something about the problem.

"If I don't have a way to talk to myself, 'I can't even change this little neighborhood, what can I do?' I was very gratified with the results." She composed a letter, which she distributed to each household in her neighborhood, asking people to join her in a community garage and bake sale to raise money for the spaying and neutering of unaltered pets in the neighborhood.

SPAY Incorporated has made great strides in reducing the number of animals born in their area and beyond.

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### Person-to-person Outreach: Treat 'Em Like a Dog

By Robin Weirach, HSUS Program Director, Great Lakes Regional Office

e've all heard ourselves or someone else say, "I hate people." Admittedly, I've caught myself saying this. But most of us realize that we don't really mean it. We're just angry with people for doing cruel or ignorant things. Most people in the animal protection movement have a strong desire to make people more compassionate. But we can't cram compassion down the throat of mankind, nor can we humiliate people into being kinder. We must learn how to get through to humans in much the same way we would train a dog.

When you want to teach a dog to stop ripping up the carpet in your home, your gut reaction is to drag the dog over to the hole and point at it, yell at the dog, and force it to understand your
A friendly smile can go a long way toward getting your animal protection message across.

intentions. But as you know, it doesn’t work. The only way to cure a carpet-digging dog is to find out why he does it. Is he angry at you for leaving? Is he frightened of being alone? Is there a reason he’s trying to savor?

The next step is to pick the most likely cause and work on a solution. With humans, the strategy is really no different. Try to understand what causes their unacceptable behavior, and calmly try to work out a solution with them. It can be amusing to tackle human problems by asking yourself, “What can we do to help them change?” People want to change will never learn unless we take the time to talk with them, be compassionate and really listen, and “train” them to be better humans or pet owners.

It becomes very easy after working with people that are tired of the things they do. We’re tired of people bringing in ten all-black puppies and demanding that we find homes for them all because they “don’t want any of them put to sleep!” We’re tired of people surrendering beautiful adult, un-neutered male dogs because they can’t keep the dog at home. Some of us are also tired of working in substandard conditions.

Many shelters are very depressing places to work—dark corridors, damp corners, crumbling walls. Then to top it all off, you have to face those beautiful, precious souls as you tell them goodbye. Some days, it becomes more than you think you can bear—standing there with an aching back, wet feet, and a painful scratch on your face from the big goof of a dog who likes to jump up and kiss your face whenever possible. Just then, the phone rings and talking with a human is the last thing you want to do.

Your people skills are tested dramatically under circumstances like this. Your organization is being tested, and how you handle yourself can make or break your efforts to help the animals.

The sad fact is that no matter how bad your day may be, if you treat people poorly, you are hurting the animals by deteriorating the credibility of the organization you work for. If the public does not believe that your organization is truly humane and caring about animals and humans, there is a strong chance that public support and cooperation will be difficult to muster. The cooperation of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and even judges will be affected by the treatment they and the general public receive from your organization.

You may be saying to yourself, “I am polite; I don’t yell or swear or hang up on people. Isn’t that enough?” Rudeness can be severe and brash, or it can be as simple as giving someone the impression that you are insincere or uncaring.

When people call your office and you have to leave an already frustrated person even more so, you may help the man keep his pet rather than surrender it.

Sure, some animals are surrendered simply for the convenience of the owners—they can’t be bothered with the beast. Nevertheless, they did choose to bring it to a shelter rather than dropping it off or simply ignoring its suffering. If you do not seize the opportunity to state your case politely, right then and there, you will never have the chance again. No one wants to listen to a bitter speech, but a person may listen to you if you show respect. If you tell the person off, you have lowered yourself, and you have failed in your mission to educate and prevent future ignorance.

Animal protection workers desperately need people to listen to their messages: “Get your cat spayed!” “Don’t let your dog run loose!” etc., etc.

The best way to get people to listen is to speak respectfully. What we must never forget is that politeness and tact can also be spelled professionalism.

If we treat humans with the same understanding and patience that we lovingly give dogs and cats, we may go a lot farther in encouraging compassionate and responsible behavior.

No matter how difficult dealing with people can be, you must present an image of caring.

functions of the SPCA, discuss animal questions and problems, or watch educational videos.

Joan Richardson, president of the Mobile SPCA (2719 Springhill Ave., Mobile, AL 36607), is very proud of the van and pleased with the kind of outreach it makes possible. The specially designed and equipped trailer, complete with its own power generator, goes anywhere and gives the SPCA’s volunteers an “office on wheels.” The van has cabinets for storing materials and office supplies, a VCR and television for showing videos, and a

"Care-A-Van": Outreach on Wheels

red pickup pulls a neat, white trailer down the street in Mobile, Alabama. Drivers following the trailer see paw prints across the back and learn that they are behind the Mobile SPCA’s “Care-A-Van.” Those who are curious enough to follow it to its destination find that the Care-A-Van is a complete outreach vehicle, one of the first of its kind. If they stick around, they can pick up information on pet care, learn about the them out of your hair, but that you want to help them with their problem. By saying something as simple as “Please call us back if that agency can’t help you,” you have quickly shown that you are sincere. If you say, “We don’t handle that. Call so and so,” and then quickly hang up, you may leave an already frustrated person even more so.

When a fellow brings in his unaltered male dog because the dog won’t stay home, you might be tempted to say, “You realize that your dog will have to be put to sleep if you surrender it.” Instead, by saying something like, “I may be able to help you keep your dog from roaming; could I offer you some suggestions?” you may help the man keep his pet rather than surrender it.

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The Care-A-Van’s success may lead to grants being awarded for similar projects at other humane agencies, so the activities and uses of the van are being carefully documented.

In fact, everything about the Care-A-Van has been done with thoughtful planning and preparation. The volunteers staffing the van are well prepared. “Before we put it on the road,” Richardson explains, “we had training classes for the volunteers. We wanted everyone to be familiar with the trailer equipment and our own materials. We all wanted to be saying the same things when people asked us questions.”

So far, reaction to the van has been positive. “People are seeing us and remembering that we’ve been by before,” Richardson says. The best promotion of the Los Angeles SPCA (5026 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016), the answer is easy for them.

There were probably several cases that we never heard of,” said Sgt. Cori Whetstone, field supervisor of the Los Angeles vicinity’s six area codes and reach the investigations department directly. The SPCA attracted media attention to the tip line via a press conference at which they received a mayorial proclamation honoring their investigations and emergency rescue services, and unveiled new uniforms, badges, and vehicle equipment.

Media coverage since then has centered around certain “human interest” tip line cases. To further promote the tip line and the illegality of animal cruelty, the SPCA recently prepared posters and radio and TV PSAs that feature the slogan: “Animal Cruelty—It’s A Crime.”

The department’s six humane investigators answer the tip line 13 hours a day; they may promote non-cruelty or non- rescue calls to other agencies. An answering machine greets callers after-hours, and emergencies are referred to the SPCA’s shelter dispatcher. In the future, the SPCA hopes to man the phones 24 hours a day and have 24-hour response for all cases.

For now, though, the investigators are kept busy enough, although they’re not complaining. As Whetstone says, “It’s hard for me to imagine now that we ever existed without the tip line.”

Shelters Participate in Earth Day

On April 22, citizens and organizations around the world will celebrate Earth Day 1990, the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. It’s a special day of activities designed to show each of us how we can change our lifestyles and help stop the earth’s environmental destruction from deforestation, species extinction, ozone depletion, and other growing concerns.

The HSUS, with the slogan “Animals . . . It’s Their World, Too,” will have a booth at the major festivities in Washington, DC, where it will distribute posters, literature, and other materials to help raise public awareness of the relationship between the environmental threats to our planet and the protection of animals with whom we share the earth. Several HSUS regional offices plan to participate in local activities that day and we encourage local humane organizations to get involved as well.

Recently, The HSUS mailed to humane societies and animal control departments a citizens’ guide entitled “101 Ways To Help Heal The Earth.” Produced for Earth Day by The HSUS and the Greenhouse Crisis Foundation, this informative guide offers tips on ways to conserve soil, water, light, power, and other resources. Write The HSUS for a copy if your shelter did not receive one. Copies cost $3.50 each.

Agencies that want more information about regional and local Earth Day activities should contact Earth Day 1990, Box AA, Stanford, CA 94309; (415) 321-1990.

“Tip Line” Increases Cruelty Reports

ow do you encourage members of the public to report cases of animal cruelty or neglect? According to the Investigation/Rescue Department of the Los Angeles SPCA (5026 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016), the answer is logical: you tell them it’s a crime and make it easy for them.

That reasoning prompted the SPCA last August 30 to develop an animal abuse “tip line.” The toll-free number—(800) 540-SPCA—enables those who see animals being mistreated or in need of emergency care to dial from any of the Los Angeles vicinity’s six area codes and reach the investigations department directly.

“We realized that for every cruelty call we got, there were probably several cases that we never heard of,” said Sgt. Cort Whetstone, field supervisor for the division. By publicizing one, toll-free number as a “tip line,” they felt they could overcome some of the apathy, ignorance, and “I don’t want to get involved” attitudes that witnesses of animal mistreatment often feel.

Through January 1990, over 1,100 calls had been received on the line, 230 of which were reports of actual cruelty or neglect. When combined with the 750 reports taken over the SPCA’s original number, the total represented a 21 percent increase in the number of abuse or neglect calls since the tip line was established.

The SPCA attracted media attention to the tip line via a press conference at which they received a mayorial proclamation honoring their investigations and emergency rescue services, and unveiled new uniforms, badges, and vehicle equipment. They used that forum to announce the new number, which was soon reported and published by media all over the area.

12 SHELTER SENSE APRIL 1990
Film Promotes Respect for Life

An outstanding new children's film by Erik Friedl, producer of Friend for Life and Kiss the Animals Goodbye, promotes respect and understanding for all living creatures.

Using the metaphor of a spider's web, Protecting the Web helps students understand that all living things are part of the earth's ecosystem and that choices they make in everyday life can help or hurt other living creatures. It encourages them to become more aware of the animals in their own lives, to appreciate wildlife (including insects and other animals we sometimes consider pests), and to be responsible pet owners.

Produced for Chicago's Anti-Cruelty Society specifically for students in upper elementary and middle schools, Protecting the Web is an excellent 15-minute educational resource for humane organizations. It touches on many of the issues that humane groups must deal with: habitat destruction, respect for life, pet overpopulation, responsible pet ownership, and euthanasia.

Touchingly written and narrated, this film and its beautiful photography will stimulate children to think about and discuss these important issues. A teacher's guide accompanies the film to suggest activities and questions for further learning.

The film is available for purchase from Pyramid Film & Video in 16mm format ($350) or on VHS Beta II videocassette ($305). Three-day rental is $55. For more information on Protecting the Web, Kiss the Animals Goodbye, or Friend for Life, call Pyramid Film & Video toll-free at 1 (800) 421-2304.

MSPCA Overpopulation Ads Available

Professional advertising agency commissioned by the Massachusetts SPCA (MSPCA) has created some outstanding materials that can be used for pet overpopulation awareness campaigns across the country.

Designed on a pro bono basis by Creative Director Stavros Cosmopulos and his staff at the Boston ad agency Cosmopulos, Crowley & Daly, the public service advertisements were produced for a recent MSPCA campaign. The effective ads contributed to a 39 percent increase in the number of spays and neuters done through the MSPCA's programs. Because of that success, the MSPCA is now encouraging others to utilize these materials in their communities.

Included are four powerful print ads, one of which is featured as this month's Reproducible (see opposite page). Humane agencies and animal control departments can order the complete set of four camera-ready ads—which are printed in various sizes on six glossy sheets—for just $2 per set.

Also available are two, 30-second television PSAs, one featuring a dog and the other a cat. Both PSAs take a unique but effective approach in persuading viewers to spay and neuter their pets. Both spots are available on one tape, which costs $20 (1" tape), $15 (8/4"), or $7 (1/2" for VHS).

Artwork from the MSPCA for billboards and mass-transit ads is available as well. The print materials are "generic" and include blank space to allow humane groups and animal control agencies to include their name and logo on them. The tapes allow organizations to include their own tag line at the end of them.

For more information, contact Elaine Birkholtz, MSPCA, 350 South Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130; (617) 541-5008.

Some tricks they'll never learn.

If animals were responsible for their own birth control, there might not be a need to kill millions of unwanted dogs and cats each year. That's the cost of not having your pet spayed or neutered. Fixed.

Even bringing a litter of puppies or kittens to an animal shelter is no guarantee they'll find a home before room has to be made for more. Having your pet spayed or neutered is the only way to reduce the sad number of ownerless dogs and cats destroyed this year.

And it will also increase your pet's chances of living a longer and healthier life. That responsibility is yours alone.

You'll never stop your pets from acting naturally. But if you love them, you'll have them fixed.

Talk to your veterinarian. Or contact us for a free information packet on birth control for your pet.

Creative by Cosmopulos, Crowley & Daly, Inc., Boston, MA Stavros Cosmopulos, Creative Director

This ad provided by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
Congress Responds to Your Requests

By Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals

Thank you all of you and your members who contacted your senators and representatives, the United States' Congress has proclaimed April 1990 as National "Prevent A Litter" Month.

Of all the community animal issues you face daily, none have more far-reaching implications than pet overpopulation.

I urge you to use this declaration and the support of Congress as ammunition in your efforts to educate your community about the consequences of this national tragedy.

Whether or not you participate in our "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" Campaign, the only way to address this problem is through an active community outreach program. You must take your message about pet overpopulation—and all the other animal issues—to the community repeatedly. Use whatever means you can to ensure that people learn not only the importance of spaying and neutering their pets, but also what your organization does and what it stands for.

Sure, an effective outreach program requires manpower and funds, two resources we all know are hard to come by. But you must consider the long-term benefits to your agency and the animals in your care. Treating the root causes of community animal problems through outreach and education now will save you from treating their symptoms later.

And don’t forget that Shelter Sense can help. Most of the information we include inside these pages is meant to help you, the humane professional, perform your job better. But much of it is also fully intended for you to pass on to your community.

Of course, we always urge you to use the Reproducible to educate people through your newsletter or other local publications. But also feel free to pass along any other information you find in Shelter Sense. You never need special permission to reproduce it; simply give credit to "Shelter Sense/HSUS" where any reprint appears.

I realize that maintaining an active presence in your community can be an expensive and time-consuming task. But it’s a task you can’t afford not to do. You must be an active voice for animals in your community.

And because of the pressure you exerted on the U.S. Congress, that voice can now be even stronger.