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Community Working Together To Bring Pets Home



Overview

Emergency Foster Program was implemented to save lives and place all pets out of the shelter and in homes during the pandemic.

Challenge

We are a large pet shelter in the Central Valley with an average of 400-500 pets to care for at the shelter, seven days a week. Upon the onset of the pandemic and so many unknowns, we had to take immediate action. Questions and no answers such as would we have enough staff to care for all the pets at the shelter? What about creating space at the shelter for pets that owners were hospitalized due to the corona virus? The challenge was clear for us. Send all pets to community foster homes, and out of the shelter.

Solution

Stanislaus Animal Services Agency (SASA) implemented an Emergency Foster Program. In the past this program did not exist, it was the missing link for a lifesaving program for a large shelter. We cleared the shelter in three days in March 2020. The pandemic forced us to respond in an expeditious manner. An online emergency foster application using google forms was created and placed on the website. A plea was made for foster families and the plea led to a tremendous community support. We were able to place hundreds of pets in foster homes, in three days at the beginning of the pandemic. It truly was a win-win for everyone! The community stepped up and committed to foster and most of the pets were adopted to their fosters, fosters found other adopters and new fosters were established for the future.



Innovation

Our goal is to keep this momentum going and develop a robust Foster Program to become the way of the future for all pets. Only animals that enter the shelter are the ones who truly need our services. We need to create policies around developing a foster program before we open after COVID-19. The silver lining is our current situation has forced us to take a step back and really look at how our shelter should function in the future.

Results

Fosters Saves Lives has proven to be life saving and the foster model not only was the immediate solution to a situation, the program will become part of the future of life saving programs. At the end of the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 we reported our life saving efforts as 82% for cats and 97% for dogs.

Foster Homes save pets lives, Foster reduces expenses such as the labor to clean kennels, feed/water, and social interaction. Foster drastically reduced medication for kennel cough since less animals at the shelter. Pets in foster homes are cleaner, happier and more socialized.

Replicability

This Foster Saves Lives program serves as a model for other communities. We shared experience with other counties. The picture of clearing the shelter was featured on multiple social media to include the Modesto News, and our local Assemblyman. Julie Castle, CEO, Best Friends Animal Society, mentioned our name in the NY Times article for the success of clearing the shelter during the pandemic.

PROJECT CONTACT

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