

# The No Kill Advocate

*A No Kill nation is within our reach*

*Issue #2 2008*

**We are moving!** The No Kill Advocacy Center is moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. We expect to complete our move by the end of March. Please pardon any delays in responding to inquiries. Our new address and telephone numbers will be posted when the move is complete and will be announced via our list-serve.

## **Saving Pit Bulls from HSUS, PETA, Michael Vick**

**A**fter the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) sent out donation appeals to people, claiming they needed the money to care for the dogs seized from dog fighter Michael Vick (which HSUS did not have and wasn't caring for), Wayne Pacelle, HSUS' CEO stated: "*it does not make sense to keep these animals alive.*" PETA weighed in too saying that killing the dogs "*may be the best thing to do for everyone concerned.*"

HSUS and PETA wanted to add the ultimate insult (death) to a life of injury (dog-fighting) for the dog victims of Michael Vick. According to the New York Times:

*The Humane Society of the United States and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recommended that Mr. Vick's dogs be euthanized, but many animal rescue organizations urged the prosecutors to let the dogs live.*



Despite the recommendations of HSUS and PETA, prosecutors allowed the dogs to go to No Kill adoption groups all over the country. Reno News Gazette writer Mark Robison put it best:

*PETA and the Humane Society of the United States lobbied to have all of the pit bulls killed. These organizations really need to be shamed for promoting death instead of life for rescued animals; their opposition to no-kill efforts is simply inexcusable.*





Now HSUS is trying to back-peddle saying the situation is more "complex" and "nuanced." There is nothing complex or nuanced about dead dogs. Had the court listened, none of the dogs you see in the pictures above and below would be alive today. (Photographs of Vick dogs being cared for by Best Friends Animal Society.)



## PETA and Pit Bulls

PETA has had a long standing policy that all Pit Bulls entering shelters should be systematically killed. In an Op Ed piece which appeared in a San Francisco newspaper, Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's founder stated that:

*Most people have no idea that at many animal shelters across the country, any "pit bull" who comes through the front door goes out the back door—in a body bag. From San Jose to Schenectady, many shelters have enacted policies requiring the automatic destruction of the huge and ever-growing number of "pits" they encounter. This news shocks and outrages the compassionate dog-lover. Here's another shocker: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the very people who are trying to get you to denounce the killing of chickens for the table, foxes for fur, or frogs for dissection, supports the pit bull policy...*



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## Stoking the Fires

*How the animal protection movement is failing Pit Bulls.*



“Teach Compassion.” It is perhaps the most important job we have as animal protectionists. In the mission statement of every animal welfare and animal rights group, every private and public shelter, and within the credo of every activist is a calling to raise awareness of animal suffering and to ultimately encourage more humane treatment. From the earliest days of our movement’s founding, we have heeded the call to change the hearts and minds of the public, knowing that doing so is a precursor to changes in laws and practices that result in animal suffering. But we have our

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**We must rally against the injustice of politics which condemn entire breeds of dogs to death**

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blind spots.

There is no breed of dog in America more abused, maligned, and misrepresented than the American Pit Bull Terrier. There is no breed of dog more in need of our compassion; in need of our call to arms on their behalf; and in need of what should be the full force of our enduring sanctuary. But we have determined that they are not worthy of it.

We have determined that they do not deserve to live. The more circumspect among us might not say so publicly. We may couch it in more benign terms, shifting the blame to others, claiming that no one will adopt them, convincing ourselves that only a ban will keep them out of harm’s way, but the end result is exactly the same. By our actions, by our words, by our policies, by our failure to speak out on their behalf, we stoke the fire that has at its core only one end for Pit Bulls: their mass killing.

To a breed abused for fighting, victimized by an undeserved reputation, relegated to certain death in shelters, add one more torment: those who should be their most ardent protectors have instead turned against them. We have joined the witch hunt.

The very agencies whose officers seek out dog fighters and abusers in order to “save” the poor creatures relegate Pit Bulls to locked and barren corridors away from public view. Ultimately, all of them—the healthy and friendly ones, side-by-side with the hopelessly sick or vicious—are uniformly put to death.

In an Oregon county, Pit Bulls are

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killed en masse in a shelter with an avowed No Kill goal by misusing temperament testing as a de facto ban on the breed. In Denver, Colorado, they are simply outlawed and executed. And People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the nation's most outspoken animal rights group, as joined the battle to exterminate these dogs—demanding that all cities ban the breed, and all Pit Bulls who enter shelters seeking sanctuary, should instead be killed.

Ending the tragic plight of the American Pit Bull Terrier should be among our most ardent goals. We must educate people that the Pit Bull's misfortune is in finding themselves the favored breed of the dog fighter at this time in history—a distinction shared at one time by the German Shepherd, Doberman, and Rottweiler. And a distinction that will shift to another breed if we ban Pit Bulls but do not bring about an end to the scourge of dog fighting.

We must rally against the injustice of politics which condemns entire breeds of dogs—in practical terms, literally hundreds of thousands of dogs a year—to death.

Where there is vilification, we should teach compassion. Where there are scare tactics, we should preach temperance. Where there are lies, we should speak the truth. Otherwise, the animal welfare movement will have failed the Pit Bull completely.

## **Fear Mongering**

*Whenever there is talk about dog bites and dog bite epidemics, the media uses it as an opportunity to vilify Pit Bulls. We talked to our director,*

*Nathan J. Winograd about dogs, dog bites, and Pit Bulls.*

**No Kill Advocacy Center:** Do we have a dog bite epidemic in the U.S.?

**Nathan J. Winograd:** No. The experiences of shelters who have embraced the culture of lifesaving that No Kill represents prove that the vast majority of dogs who enter shelters are friendly. If we take this as a representative sample of dogs in society, then we do not have either an epidemic or even a significant problem of dangerous dogs in the United States that would justify a further clamp-down. If, on the other hand, we take dogs who enter shelters to be at higher risk of aggression (say, for the sake of argument, we can show that they have less training, spend more time isolated outdoors, have less care than dogs who do not enter shelters), then the situation is actually of less concern since we would expect to see more aggression in shelter dogs than dogs who live with their families their whole lives. And given that 93% of shelter dogs are friendly to kids, cats and dogs—the number is higher if we just isolate aggression to people (about 96-97%)—the fear-based hysteria of dangerous dogs becomes demonstrably false.

What is true, however, is that public health authorities, dog bite lawyers, the Centers for Disease Control, legislators, animal control shelters, police departments, humane societies, and even national animal welfare groups argue that millions of people are bitten every year by dogs. Some of these groups call for a ban on certain breeds, others claim we need to teach or enforce "responsible pet ownership;" others seek more and

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tougher laws. But just because they say it is so doesn't make it so.

**NKAC:** Are you saying we do not need to do more to prevent dog bites?

**NJW:** While our hearts go out to the victims of serious dog bite attacks, there is little in the way of evidence that more regulation, more laws, further crackdowns on dogs is justified as a way to prevent these. At the end of the day, the vast majority of dogs are friendly and will never act aggressively, dogs are already heavily regulated, and there is little by way of additional public policy initiatives (e.g., legislation) that is needed in trying to prevent a "dog bite epidemic" that simply does not exist.

Animal protection groups should stop focusing on this type of fear-based advocacy, stop perpetuating myths, and start educating the public about the truth regarding the dogs they theoretically exist to protect, who they fundraise off of, and who they claim they are working to save.

It is not the job of an animal protection group to mimic the claims of a dog bite lawyer. Where there is fear and misinformation which would call for a crackdown on dogs and dog lovers, with little justification and through methods that provide little in the way of actual protection, it is our job to quell that, not fan the flames of distortion, as they so often do.

**NKAC:** Since the number of dogs in households is increasing, doesn't that correlate with more bites?

**NJW:** No, despite an explosion in the number of dogs in the U.S. and their greater integration in society, the number of fatal dog attacks has

remained relatively constant for decades. You are "five times more likely to be killed by a bolt of lightning" and "four times more likely to be killed by a forklift, even though a very small number of people come into contact with these machines." [Bradley, Janis, *Dogs Bite* (2005: James & Kenneth Publishers)] In other words, comparatively speaking, it is exceedingly rare.

We will never eliminate risk in society. We can minimize it, but in the case of dogs, there is little more that can and should be done. And, in many ways, we need to undo some of the laws and regulations because they allow friendly dogs to be killed without making anyone safer (such as breed bans).

**NKAC:** What would you say to breed ban proponents?

**NJW:** Dogs are already heavily regulated: they must be licensed with local authorities, they cannot go in public places without a leash (if at all), they must be vaccinated against rabies, you can't live with more than a small number of them, animal control officers can seize and destroy them if they determine that they are a nuisance, and the threshold of making a determination that they are dangerous and subject to extermination puts dogs at a disadvantage, even when the facts show otherwise. Together, license laws, leash laws, vaccination laws, pet limit laws, nuisance laws, health codes, property laws, and dangerous dog laws control dogs, in concert with an animal sheltering system built on overkill, that there is little justification to tighten the noose even further.

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Furthermore, banning Pit Bulls or any breed of dog is geared to overkill by definition because—media hysteria to the contrary—the vast majority of dog bites occur within the home by many breeds, with the dog biting a member of the family after some provocation, a different causal mechanism than the false image presented: an epidemic of free roaming Pit Bulls attacking unknown children or the elderly. As a result, a breed ban won't stop the vast majority of dog bites. On top of that, roughly 20% of those bites are a result of the dog defending him or her-self from being attacked.

And although breed specific legislation proponents like to say that millions of Americans are bitten every year (a dubious proposition), what they don't say is that, even if that were true (it is not), over 92% of dog bites result in no injuries. Let me repeat, over nine out of ten bites that do occur result in no one getting hurt. And of those which do result in injury, 7.5% are minor. In fact, they are less severe than any other class of injury. That leaves less than 1% (0.08% to be exact) of all bites ranking at moderate or above.

I am not downplaying even the death or maiming of a single person. It is tragic. And as an animal control director, I had no tolerance for the adoption of aggressive dogs. But creating public policy—and shelter standards—needs careful and thoughtful deliberation, not incendiary fanaticism that reduces everything to a meaningless debate about the value of dogs vs. children, and allows friendly dogs to be killed as a result.

## Saving Pit Bulls in Shelters

In 2002, an animal control shelter in New York State saved 86% of all Pit Bulls (100% of all healthy and treatable ones) despite impounding every stray dog regardless of behavior. It did so even after a rigorous temperament evaluation screened out aggression to children, dogs or cats. That result calls into question the views of even progressive directors and their assumptions about the adoptability of Pit Bulls. How did the shelter manage to save almost nine out of every ten Pit Bulls? And, more importantly, how can other shelters do it too?

In practical terms, the answer lies in a multi-prong strategy of short and long term efforts to change the life and death calculus for sheltered Pit Bulls. Philosophically, shelters must embrace the core principles of the No Kill ideal: model compassion, act kindly, save lives, and above all, do no harm. In other words, we need to go back to our roots. And that starts with taking responsibility for Pit Bulls.

### Losing our way

The first step in changing the dynamic of the status quo insofar as Pit Bulls are concerned is to stop blaming the victims—to claim that they are not “adoptable” and/or only a ban will save them from the scourge of dog fighting. As long as shelter directors refuse to do their jobs as animal protectors, Pit Bulls will continue to needlessly die.

### Why are you surrendering your dog?

And responsibility starts at the door. So when someone comes in or calls about surrendering their dog, the first



step is to ask a simple question that can help prevent a surrender when that is the appropriate and compassionate thing to do—“why are you surrendering your pet?”

The answer could make all the difference. By putting in place pet retention programs like behavior advice, low-cost dog training, increasing off leash dog park opportunities, increasing the pool of available rental units that allow pets, a medical care fund, and more, shelters begin to prevent animals from being surrendered in the first place.

Combined with an aggressive spay/neuter program to provide lower cost services to qualified low income households, this strategy can reduce the number of Pit Bulls entering shelters. At one California shelter, Pit Bulls were sterilized for free, no questions asked. “We were offering Pit Bulls owners not only free spay/neuter,” said a former Director of Operations for the shelter. “But we also did various promotions, sometimes offering as much as a \$20 cash incentive as well. So we not only paid for the spay, we also paid them for the privilege of allowing us to do it. Not surprisingly, the number of Pit

Bulls entering the shelter system began declining annually.”

**Comprehensive adoption programs**  
While shelters work hard to reduce Pit Bull intakes, they should also be working just as hard to increase Pit Bull adoptions.

Increasing adoptions means offsite adoption events, public access hours, greater visibility in the community, working with rescue groups, social marketing, and a good public image. It means promoting animals to the community in a proactive way. It also means adoption incentives. It has nothing to do with lowering quality.

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In one shelter, new Pit Bull adopters get more than just a new pet. They also get a free health exam at any local veterinarian in the community, free dog grooming at a local pet salon, ten percent off the first purchase of all

their pet supplies at a local store, free dog behavior advice as long as they own their pet, a free engraved identification tag, a fee bag of premium dog food, discounts for local dog obedience and training classes, a guide to caring for their new dog, a free collar, a dog toy, even discounts at their local coffee chain.

In addition to other strategies, this proactive marketing of dogs helps them compete with pet stores and puppy mills. And best of all, the shelter does not pay for a single item. They are all donated by local businesses who want access to the one agency that makes more new pet owners than any other in the county.

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And since Pit Bulls may have a longer length of stay, promoting this strategy for all dogs allows quicker adoptions which mean less competition for available kennel space, allowing shelters to take more time with Pit Bulls.

### What's in a name?

So what's in a name? Especially if the name is connected to a Pit Bull, plenty. To begin with, current and common shelter names decrease length of stay. Dogs named "Harry Potter" will always get adopted quicker than dogs named "Harry Truman." Changing names changes the public perception.

"We did an experiment in our shelter," said a veterinary technician. "We took identical litters and gave some names like 'Buddy' and 'Molly,' and other more unique names like 'Karma' and 'Sasha.' Buddy and Molly always got adopted first. We also tried to name more difficult-to-place animals with really current names. We had an old beat up gray cat who sat in our shelter for a long time, so we changed his name from Smokey to Dumbledore, the wizard from Harry Potter. A family came in to adopt a kitten but ended up adopting Dumbledore because the kid demanded the wizard cat."

For Pit Bulls, names like "Capone" or "Rocko" mean the difference between a long term stay—or worse—and adoption. All Pit Bulls should have soft names like "Daisy," "Teddy Bear" and "Sweet Pea." Collars should be pink or have flowers. And staff should exercise them regularly so they are not jumping or pulling hard when taken for walks by potential adopters.

### Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf?

These short term strategies should be

pursued rigorously while shelters work unceasingly to promote a better view of Pit Bulls over the long term. By killing all Pit Bulls, banning the breed, pushing Pit lovers underground, and refusing to accept any responsibility for the numbers of Pit Bulls being killed, shelters undermine their own goals by perpetuating a myth of Pit Bulls that is unfair.

It starts with changing shelter culture and practice as it relates to Pit Bulls. It includes pro-Pit Bull campaigns to show what a friendly, family oriented dog the American Pit Bull can be. And it ends with promoting Pit Bulls in publications and articles so that over time the shelter can revamp the image of Pit Bulls held in the community.

## Five Steps to Increasing Pit Bull Adoptions

*We surveyed a number of progressive animal control directors in California, New York and Pennsylvania about how they increased their Pit Bull adoptions. These are some of their answers:*

### 1. Public Access Adoption Hours

Given that working people and families are the two most important adopter demographics a shelter should be trying to reach, how much sense does it therefore make to open during normal "business" hours (9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday) when that limits the ability of people who work and families with children in school to visit the shelter? Opening and closing later, say 11 am to 7 pm, and opening on weekends, might not have to mean more hours, just different ones, but the change can make all the difference. "Our adoptions increased by as much as ten-fold when we

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stayed open for adoptions later and on weekends," says a shelter director in Philadelphia.

## 2. Public Relations

Good, consistent public relations is the key to getting your paws on more money, more volunteers, more adoptions, and more community good will. Indeed, if lifesaving is your bottom line, public relations are the vehicle which will get you there. Without it, your shelter or group will always be struggling with animals, finances, and community recognition. Studies show that people get their pets from a shelter only 15% of the time.

Service oriented groups in communities, such as Rotary, Lions Club and Seniors, rarely include the local shelter in their organization's philanthropy. And while lawyers and doctors work with low-cost clinics, too many animal groups work with too few veterinarians and their local veterinary medical association. "Increasing adoptions, maximizing donations, recruiting volunteers and partnering with community agencies comes down to one thing: increasing the shelter's exposure," says a former animal control director. "And that means consistent marketing and public relations.

Public relations and marketing are the foundation of all our shelter's activities and our success. To do all these things well, our shelter must be in the public eye."

## 3. Don't Let 'Em Leave Empty Handed

How often does someone come to a shelter to adopt only to leave empty handed? The answer may surprise you. According to the folks at Pet Ark, it can be as high as 90% of the time.

That means lost opportunities and, in the era of catch and kill animal sheltering, lost lives. To keep animals moving out the door into loving, new homes, don't sell the animals short. Making sure prospective adopters know about animals in other city shelters, in foster care, and with local rescue groups increases the safety net in a community.

"Unfortunately many short-sighted animal control directors see other shelters as competition. We look at the total community adoption market and see that together we can save the greatest numbers of lives. If someone doesn't find the pet they are looking for at our shelter, we let them know about the animals available at other shelters in our community, those in foster care, and those with local rescue groups. If they adopt from rescue, that group will have room to help take another pet out of our facility," says a director in California.

## 4. The Business of Saving Lives

In one New York community, a person can buy a kitten from a pet store for \$50. Or they can adopt a kitten from the shelter for \$130. For some people, the choice is easy, especially if the pet store is in front of them.

In another New York community, a person can buy a kitten from a pet store for \$50, but they can adopt one from the shelter—spayed and vaccinated—for less than that. In addition, they also get free pet food, a free visit to a veterinarian of their choice, a cat care guide, an engraved identification tag and more.

In addition, because the shelter does offsite adoptions, people can adopt from the same mall as the pet store selling kittens so they don't have to

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drive to an out of the way facility. Saving lives—whether kittens or Pit Bulls—means competing head-to-head with the backyard breeders, the puppy mills, and pet stores.

It means running a shelter more like a business, and less like a bureaucracy. “When we compete head to head, we win. Not only do we offer more for less, but we also add the intangible—the good feeling that comes with helping to save a life,” says a shelter manager in New York.

### 5. Make Your Shelter Inviting

It would be no exaggeration to say that poor customer service, poor location, poor cleaning practices and poor socialization in shelters are not only epidemic in shelters, they are endemic to animal control. When lives are at stake, there is no room for uncaring, incompetence and low productivity. These employees not only steal taxpayer money when they under-perform, they literally steal the lives of the animals. To keep people coming in, a shelter must be inviting.

And that means friendly and knowledgeable staff, cleanliness, and opportunities for people to see and play with the animals. “Too often, shelter directors overplay the risks of people playing with the animals and underplay the benefits. We let people walk the dogs, play with them in their kennels, throw a ball in a fenced yard, even let the dogs splash in a kiddie pool we set out.”

“Our experience is that the more people can interact with the animals, the more they come, the longer they stay, and the more adoptions we do,” said a former shelter manager in California.

*Are there only five steps? Hardly. Consider the following as well:*

- **Better promotion and presentation:** “We try to tug at people’s emotional heart strings when we feature Pet of the Week ads in our local newspaper. If I could make you cry, I could get you to adopt one of our dogs.”
- **Pet retention programs to help people overcome medical, behavioral or environmental problems that may cause them to relinquish their pets:** “Keeping harder-to-place animals with their responsible caregivers allowed us to spend more time on those already in our shelter.”
- **Foster care:** “If a foster parent took a Pit Bull to the park, to pick up the kids at school, to other places, that dog gets lots of one-on-one exposure he might not get in our shelter competing with other dogs.”
- **Working with rescue groups:** “Rescue groups get any animal they want in our shelter, no matter how easily we can adopt them out ourselves. With thousands coming in every year, there is no shortage of adoptable animals. Rare is the day when we would deny rescue groups any animal they wanted.”
- **Offsite adoptions:** “If people won’t or can’t come to the shelter, we’ll take the shelter to them by setting up offsite adoption events where people live, work and play.”



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## Best of No Kill Sheltering



In 2007, the No Kill Advocacy Center stopped producing our print magazine, *No Kill Sheltering*, in order to concentrate on building more readily available and cost effective ways to help advocates, shelters, and municipalities save lives, including launching a series of online seminars and workshops, and expanding the reach of our e-newsletter, *The No Kill Advocate*.

But because so many people have requested back copies, we are making our Best of No Kill Sheltering issue available for free as a download. In this issue, we look at:

- [Defining No Kill](#). There is only one legitimate definition of what constitutes a No Kill shelter or community.
- [Adopting your Way to No Kill](#). Not only can shelters adopt their way out of killing, they should.

- [The No Kill Equation](#). The mandatory programs and services necessary for saving lives.
- [There Ought Not to be a Law](#). Legislation is not the answer to saving lives. In fact, most often it has the opposite results.
- [A Call for Regime Change](#). It is time to replace most of the nation's shelter directors for killing animals entrusted to their care and thus failing to do the job they were hired to do.
- [A Call to Ban the Gas Chamber](#). Gas killing of shelter animals is cruel and should never be used.
- [Temperament Testing in the Age of No Kill](#). A new look at how shelters mislead the public into thinking the animals they are killing are "unadoptable."
- [Waiting so Long for so Little](#). HSUS offers the feral cat community too little, too late and a TNR policy that comes with strings attached.
- [Do Feral Cats Have a right to Live?](#) A model national standard for feral cats.
- [The U.S. No Kill Declaration](#). Our manifesto for the rights of shelter animals and demands for a No Kill nation.
- [And more](#).

Now you can get some of our most important articles, all in one place. Get your copy by going to our website and clicking under "What's New."

Unfortunately, other back issues of *No Kill Sheltering* are no longer available. But don't forget to download additional articles in our free online library by clicking on the "Reforming Animal Control" section of our website at [nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)

## How They Did It!



In 2007, the number of animals killed in Washoe County animal shelters declined by 51% for dogs and 52% for cats (compared to 2006).

The save rate for dogs was 92% and 78% for cats and trending upward, despite a per capita intake rate that is over twice the national average and over three times that of many communities.

The Nevada Humane Society found new homes for 7,452 homeless dogs and cats and 578 other animals. That is an adoption rate increase of 53% for dogs and over 84% for cats (compared to 2006).

How did they do it? And can your community do it too?

The Nevada Humane Society has produced their "How To" guide and it is available for free for activists and shelter workers who want to emulate the success in their own community.

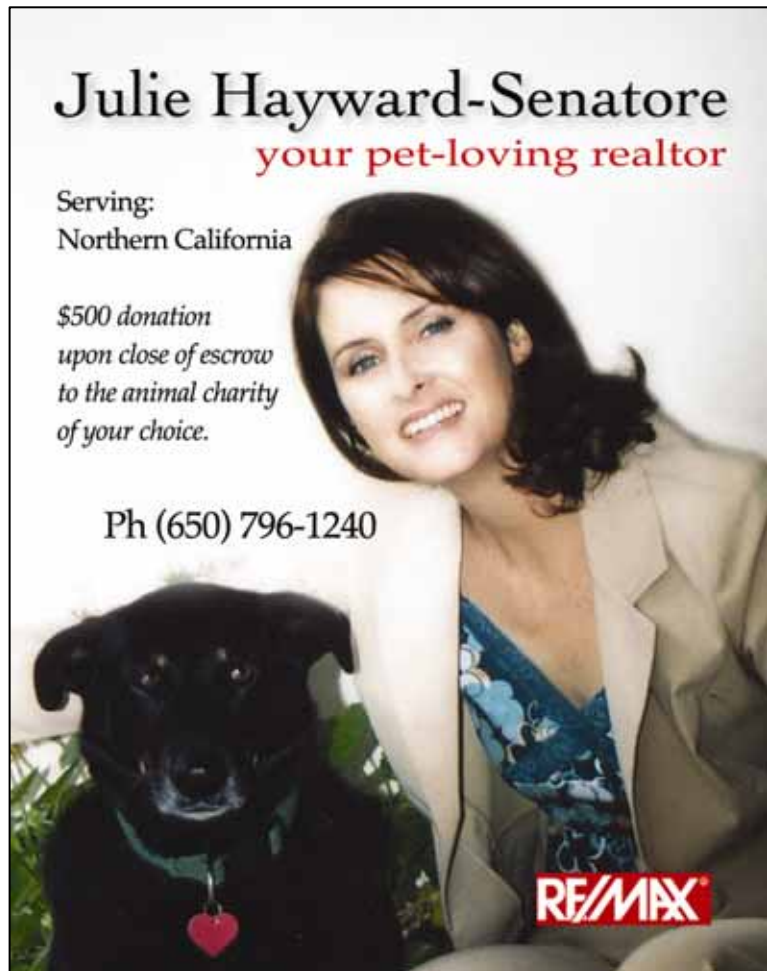
The 10-step process includes:

1. Establish priorities and align actions to save animals immediately;

2. Get "the right people on the bus;"
3. Invest time and assets in lifesaving;
4. Inspire and involve the community;
5. Increase adoptions;
6. Spay/neuter animals;
7. Actively work to keep animals out of shelters;
8. Provide a safety net for feral cats;
9. Partner with other groups; and,
10. Stay flexible.

For a free copy of the guide "How We Did It" by NHS, go to [www.nevadahumanesociety.org](http://www.nevadahumanesociety.org)

**Please note:** The guide is not produced by the No Kill Advocacy Center and NKAC is not responsible for its content.



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## The Itchmo Interview

Itchmo's Jennifer Moore caught up with No Kill Advocacy Center director Nathan J. Winograd to talk about how he got his start, the No Kill movement, and more. Here's a summary of the interview. The entire interview is available at <http://www.itchmo.com/itchmos-interview-with-nathan-winograd-4810>.

By Jennifer Moore

*Nathan Winograd, author of [Redemption](#) and passionate no-kill activist, is a busy man. When he is not touring in support of his book, he might be writing shelter manuals, giving workshops, or answering emails and phone calls from all over. Nathan was recently kind enough to give up some of his time and grant me an interview. I appreciate the time he took. His passion for no-kill is palpable.*

**Jennifer Moore:** Was there a defining moment for you, where you decided animal welfare was where you belonged, or was it a gradual transition from law into animal rescue? In other words, did you just suddenly decide to leave law, or did it take some time for you to change careers?

**Nathan Winograd:** I was a first year law student living on campus and one morning I heard a woman calling to cats in that high pitched baby voice we often use when talking to animals. I looked out my window and saw all these cats coming out of the bushes, and as a cat lover, I went downstairs to find out what she was doing. She told me about the work faculty, staff, and students were doing to protect the campus cats and the history of

how they fought the University's plans to have the cats killed. Naturally, they turned to the local humane society naively thinking that saving these cats was within their humane mission, but sadly the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley sided with the University.

Their argument was that since the cats were "wild" or "unsocialized," they were better off dead, even though they lived in a largely wooded campus, in a good climate, with plenty of shelter, and people willing to care for them. So the group turned to the Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal welfare group for support. And this organization also concluded that despite the care, the cats should be killed. For cat lovers, these views were patently inhumane and out of step with the "humane" mission of these organizations. So they banded together, began trapping, sterilizing and releasing the cats back to their habitats on campus, set up feeding stations around the University and built make-shift shelters and the Stanford Cat Network was born. From a population of 1,500 estimated by the University, there are less than 50 cats remaining and none were killed. The friendly ones were adopted into homes, and the feral ones lived out their lives. And they died old, when conventional wisdom said they should have died young and died tragically.

It was then that I learned that sheltering in the U.S. was a misnomer, that the vast majority of shelters did little more than kill animals, and did so even when the animals were not suffering. I started working with the Cat Network, then other organizations, and despite working as a prosecutor and in a corporate law firm, I never left animal

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work until I decided to devote all my time to it and left the law.

**JM:** Can you please tell us more about your background working with animals?

**NW:** I have been involved in animal rescue my whole life, as my mother was an avid cat rescuer. I've volunteered with local shelters, have fostered hundreds of kittens, served on the Board of Directors of a humane society, was Director of Operations for one of the largest and most successful shelters in the nation, was Executive Director of an open admission animal control shelter which created the nation's first (and at the time only) No Kill community, and have consulted with dozens more, including some of the largest and best known in the nation. I currently run the national No Kill Advocacy Center, the only national organization dedicated to ending the systematic killing of animals in shelters which is run by staff who have actually worked in and created No Kill communities. My book, *Redemption*, is widely considered the seminal work on animal sheltering in the U.S.

**JM:** Tell me what a typical day is like for you, when you are not doing work related to the book.

**NW:** I don't know that I have had a typical day yet. I might answer about 100 or so e-mails from shelters, rescuers, or activists across the country who need advice or guidance. I spend a lot of time on the telephone in that capacity as well. I do a weekly national radio spot. I write a blog, I am working on a shelter operations manual, I might review legislation or pleadings from a lawsuit, I might review documents from a shelter, and

I might do interviews for a shelter assessment, or be writing a report to a shelter or an article for distribution. On average of once a month, I am at a shelter somewhere in the U.S. helping them save lives or giving a seminar about how to achieve No Kill. It varies, but always involves long hours. I work seven days a week, sometimes as much as 10 hours a day.

**JM:** Why is there such resistance to the no kill movement?

**NW:** There are several possible reasons. One possibility is fear. Whenever a shelter kills a homeless animal entrusted to its care, it has profoundly failed. And animal shelters fail, as a general rule, fifty to eighty percent of the time. Put another way, animal sheltering is an industry whose leadership mostly fails. Unlike any other industry, however, these directors still retain their positions, are pillars of their communities, and are tapped as "experts" by the large national groups. That credibility, and esteem, has been seriously threatened by the No Kill movement. In other words, animal control directors—fearful of being held accountable for failure—are putting their own interests ahead of the lives of the animals.

The second possible reason is guilt. Having killed hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of dogs and cats, convinced there was no other way, shelter administrators are not able to face the fact that the vast majority of the killing they do is unnecessary.

Another possibility—and perhaps the most likely—is the most disturbing of all: some shelter directors don't care enough about the animals. Killing in the face of alternatives of which you

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are not aware, but should be, is unforgivable. It would be like a doctor who refuses to keep pace with the changing field of medicine, treating pneumonia with leeches instead of rest, antibiotics and fluid therapy. Killing in the face of alternatives you simply refuse to implement, or about which you remain willfully ignorant, is nothing short of obscene.

**JM:** How do organizations like PETA and other kill organizations think euthanasia helps or benefits animals?

**NW:** I went to a Humane Society of the United States conference a year or so ago. They held a workshop on shelter killing, where the expert giving the seminar stated that:

*What we have done on ours is "humanely destroy" rather than the word "kill." We're not, we're not killing them... "kill" is such a negative connotation. It's... we're not KILLING them. We are taking their life, we are ending their life, we are giving them a good death, we're humanely destr — whatever. But we're NOT KILLING.*

How did we come to be a movement that embraces the Orwellian logic that killing is not killing, that killing is kindness? They can offer all kinds of excuses, justifications, arguments. None of it is true. None of it has integrity. None of it should be acceptable to animal lovers across the U.S. When you deny responsibility for the killing, when you in fact deny that you are even killing, choosing to hide behind euphemisms like "putting them to sleep" or "euthanasia," the impetus to change your own behavior which might impact that killing disappears, and the task of killing is made easier.

**JM:** Why did you leave the shelters you worked with? Are they still successfully using the model you introduced?

**NW:** I left San Francisco because new shelter leadership abandoned the nuts and bolts programs which made the city the most successful in the nation. I wanted to prove No Kill was possible. And after succeeding in Tompkins County, and surpassing San Francisco as the safest community for homeless animals in the nation (and creating the nation's first No Kill community), I wanted to help other communities replicate that success. And so I started the national No Kill Advocacy Center, a non-profit dedicated to ending the systematic killing of animals in shelters. Running a shelter effectively and well is a full time responsibility. I could not do national advocacy work and run a shelter at the same time. There are simply not enough hours in the day.

In 2007, Tompkins County NY saved over 91% of all dogs, and over eight out of ten cats (87%). Tompkins has had three directors since my tenure, and many staff members I worked with including the animal control officers, dog trainers, cat team, veterinary technicians, kennel staff, and even some Board members are no longer involved. I have not been involved with the agency since August 2004. Nonetheless, Tompkins County NY has now saved 90% - 93% of dogs since 2001 despite its animal control contracts, a record of achievement unmatched anywhere, providing powerful proof of No Kill's sustainability. While the cat save rate fell below 90% for the first time in six years, it still represents almost nine out of ten cats being saved.

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**JM:** Are you running or working with any shelters at this time?

**NW:** Although I do not run shelters any more, I work closely with many of them. My latest project was in Reno, NV with the Nevada Humane Society. I spent about six months reviewing operations, writing protocols and recommendations, hiring staff, and recruiting a new director. In just one year, the kill rate for dogs and cats declined by over 50% and adoption increased by as much as 84%. They are now the safest community in the United States for homeless dogs and right up there with cats.

I am also working with the King County Council trying to bring a No Kill orientation to animal sheltering in that community. I am very busy with the No Kill Advocacy Center and a recent lawsuit against the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Control for unlawfully killing animals, refusing to work with rescue groups, and inhumane treatment of animals in its facilities. But mostly, I've spent the last four months on a national Building a No Kill Community tour, giving free workshops and seminars in over twenty cities nationwide.

**JM:** How can the average person start to implement this in his/her own community? How can he/she educate others about it and garner support?

**NW:** The power to change the status quo is in our hands. No Kill will be achieved when citizens demand that their shelters fully and rigorously implement the programs and services of the No Kill Equation, because the No Kill Equation is the only model that has achieved No Kill in the U.S. If people want to make a difference, they can do the following:

- \* Get informed: Read Building a No Kill Community.
- \* Be thorough: Follow the step-by-step guide Reforming Animal Control.
- \* Be successful: Use the proven model of the No Kill Equation.
- \* Don't settle: Demand endorsement of the U.S. No Kill Declaration.
- \* Require accountability: Seek passage of the Companion Animal Protection Act.

All of these documents are available for free on the No Kill Advocacy Center's website in the "Reforming Animal Control" section...

**JM:** Do you think this will ultimately catch on? Do you think there will be a change in the fundamentals of animal control/rescue/sheltering?

**NW:** The average American is far more progressive about dogs and cats than every animal welfare and animal rights organization in the United States, with rare exception. Collectively, we spend over 40 billion dollars on our animals, giving to animal related charities is the fastest growing segment of American philanthropy, and No Kill is on the agenda of local governments nationwide because people are demanding it. But at the end of the day, it is not about how much we spend, how many animals share our homes, or even about what we seek. In the battle over the hearts and minds of our citizenry, gaining support for No Kill among the American public is a non-sequitur, because we already have it. While animal shelters defend shelter killing of even healthy and friendly animals, most dog and cat lovers, armed with the facts, find it abhorrent.

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The achievement of No Kill requires forcing shelters to reflect our values and battling their campaigns of misinformation and distortion. Most Americans love animals but unfortunately many had been led to believe that killing is a necessary evil and that there is no other way. Until recently, the large, wealthy, and entrenched animal welfare organizations have successfully dominated the national discussion on companion animals, and they have misused that power to falsely claim that animals are being killed because of the public, despite shelters trying their very best. In reality, nine out of ten dogs and cats can be saved in shelters if they innovate, modernize, and being accountable by rigorously implementing the programs and services which save lives.

But until recently, there has been little pressure to do so, as the organizations which are supposed to be holding these agencies accountable, instead are complacent about killing and, in fact, defend it even when it is not necessary. The reality is that we already know how to end the killing, we already have the hearts and minds (and homes and wallets) of the American public in order to achieve a better world for dogs and cats. To speed progress, we need to educate the public that there is a better way, so that they demand better of their local shelter and stop accepting the excuses that have been used over the years to justify the killing.

We have the power to build a new consensus, which rejects killing as a method for achieving results. And we can look forward to a time when the wholesale slaughter of animals in shelters is viewed as a cruel

aberration of the past. To get to that point, we must learn from history and reject our failures. Whether we realize, appreciate, or believe it, as history marches toward greater compassion toward non-human animals, No Kill's conquest of the status quo is inevitable.

From Itchmo: Essential news, humor, and product reviews for cats, dogs, and pet owners by Jennifer Moore.  
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## The Nation's Premier No Kill Resource



**W**hat do you need to help save 4.5 million dogs and cats? A mouse. The No Kill Advocacy Center's completely redesigned website is now the nation's premier No Kill web resource offering:

- Tools for Activists
- Sheltering Protocols
- Step-by-Step Guides
- No Kill e-News
- Conferences & Seminars
- No Kill Job Opportunities
- Model Legislation
- A No Kill Blueprint
- Success Stories
- What You Can Do
- Donate Online
- And much more...

Visit us at [nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org).

## No Kill Conferences



May 3 – 4, 2008 in Indianapolis, IN.  
Sponsored by Move to Act.

***How do you build a No Kill community? How do you include feral cats in your community's lifesaving protection? How do you pay for it all? And what about those big black dogs, shy cats and other "compromised" animals with impediments to adoption - can good homes be found for them too?***

**C**ome to the conference that has been called "a prerequisite for rescue groups and organizations that are serious about changing their communities to No Kill."

You'll learn about No Kill programs and services that have had results in both urban and rural communities and hear effective strategies on how to prevent surrenders, increase adoptions, improve public relations, work with local government and private groups such as veterinarians, implement cost-effective behavior and medical rehabilitation programs, save feral cats, raise the money to pay for it all, and more.

Creating a better world for animals takes a community. And the community starts with you! This conference is for anyone who cares about the plight of homeless animals in shelters. We specifically encourage community leaders, shelter volunteers, employees, staff, directors, board members, Good Samaritans and rescuers to attend.

To get practical answers to end the killing of pets in your community—including finding homes for dogs and cats most shelters currently consider "unadoptable." Not in ten years, not in five years, but now - because ***Animals Deserve Our Protection Today!***

Workshops:

- Building a No Kill community
- Saving Shelter Dogs
- Feral Cat Care & Advocacy
- Finding Homes for Big Dogs, Shy Cats
- Mending Broken Bones & Spirits
- Reforming Animal Control
- And more...

***For more information, go to the "No Kill Conferences/Seminars" section of [www.nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://www.nokilladvocacycenter.org).***



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## No Kill Nation

**A** *National Tragedy.* This year, roughly 4,000,000 dogs and cats will be put to death in our nation's animal shelters. Their only "crime" is that they have no human address. Others may be sick or injured, but they could be saved with little effort. Unfortunately, they, too, will be killed. And still others are feral cats who should never enter shelters in the first place. But there is another way.

*A Reason for Hope.* In the last decade, several progressive shelters have put into place a bold series of lifesaving programs and services which have dramatically reduced the death rate in their communities. The resulting success proves that there is a formula for lifesaving, and that if we are to achieve a No Kill nation, it is incumbent upon shelters nationwide to embrace the programs and services which have been proven to save lives.

The No Kill Advocacy Center is the nation's first organization dedicated solely to the promotion of a No Kill nation. And it is the only national animal welfare agency that is staffed by people who have actually worked in and created a No Kill community.

*Join the Crusade.* But the challenges we face are great. From entrenched bureaucrats who are content with the status quo, to uncaring shelter directors hostile to calls for reform; from agencies mired in the failed philosophies of the past to those who have internalized a culture of defeatism—the roadblocks to No Kill are substantial, but not insurmountable.



We have a choice. We can fully, completely and without reservation embrace No Kill as our future. Or we can continue to legitimize the two-prong strategy of failure: adopt a few and kill the rest. It is a choice which history has thrown upon us. And a challenge that the No Kill Advocacy Center is ready to take on.

Your tax deductible contribution will help us hasten the day when animals find in their shelter a new beginning—instead of the end of the line. Working together, we can build an alternative consensus to traditional sheltering models—one which is oriented toward promoting and preserving life. An alternative which seeks to create a future where every animal will be respected and cherished, and where every individual life will be protected and revered.

**No Kill Advocacy Center**  
6114 La Salle Ave. #837  
Oakland CA 94611

Or make a secure online donation at  
[www.nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://www.nokilladvocacycenter.org).