

## ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

### New coalition seeks positive ACTION for animals

By Michel Meunier

Posted: 03/01/2009 12:00:00 AM MST

ACTION Programs for Animals is a new community coalition of independent animal advocates, representatives from animal organizations and other public stakeholders. We are joining together to advance programs and services geared toward saving and enriching companion-animal lives and those of their caregivers.

Nationally, this is an exciting point in time for animal welfare. Many communities that were much like our own not too long ago are seeing great success by implementing multiple lifesaving efforts. They have turned their statistics upside down and are now saving more than 70 percent of their homeless animals instead of the alternative.

Some of these model communities are Washoe County, Nev.; Charlottesville, Va.; Portsmouth, Va.; Porter County, Ind.; and Indianapolis, Ind.

The premise of APA is that no matter how much our personal or group philosophies regarding animals differ, we can probably all agree on these basic observations: there are too many homeless pets in our community, there are many issues we face with neglect/abuse, our shelter's intake is extremely high for a facility of its size and the area it serves, and the vast majority of animals who end up in our shelter are killed/euthanized.

This coalition is a collective challenge to us all to find ways to help and partner on those efforts we can agree on-one program at a time and one step at a time. By breaking up into realistic, goal-oriented working groups, we can work smarter and begin to see the fruits of our labor.

Some short-term program ideas are as follows:

- implement a pet help line for pet retention efforts and to re-home animals so they don't have to go into the shelter system;
- become the personal PR agent for animals who are having a hard time getting adopted from the shelter or sanctuary;
- reach out to rental agencies that don't accept pets with information on identifying and renting to responsible pet owners;
- provide food and other items to needy families along with information/outreach;
- advocate for those animals that suffer the most, such as chained dogs, pit bulls, etc.

The good ideas are endless; the possibilities for partnerships and networking are endless as well-between individuals, animal non-profits, business owners, civic leaders, and others in the community. By working in an area where your skills and passions are utilized, you will feel a sense of accomplishment, and it won't feel like "work!"

This beats giving in to hopelessness, anger, or apathy. We all know that negativity never leads to change or progress; only positive action does.

Our next monthly progress meeting is at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Branigan Library (in the Dress Room). For more information, call (575) 644-0505 or e-mail [cheressemm@gmail.com](mailto:cheressemm@gmail.com).

Michel Meunier is an APA coalition organizer and the author of the "No Kill Revolution" blog.